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**FAMILY, COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL CAPITAL AND  
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT DURING THE *DOI MOI*  
PROCESS IN VIET NAM**

A Dissertation Presented

by

DUONG VAN THANH

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 2004

School of Education

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# FAMILY, COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT DURING THE *DOI MOI* PROCESS IN VIET NAM

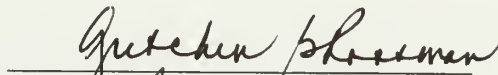
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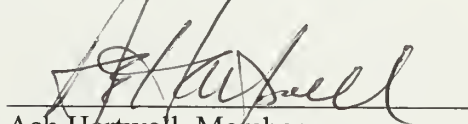
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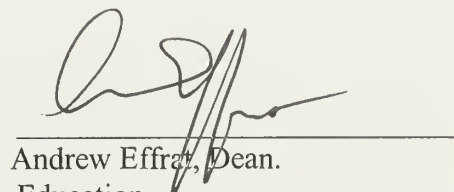
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Education

## DEDICATION

To my parents Vinh and Tuyet, my husband Hung and my children Quan and Dieu

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **FAMILY, COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT DURING THE *DOI MOI* PROCESS IN VIET NAM FEBRUARY 2004**

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We still have a limited understanding of the factors leading to the large differences in educational attainment in the developing world. This empirical study attempted to gain a better understanding of educational attainment in developing countries by examining social factors in order to determine whether or not family-and community-based social capital affect Vietnamese students' educational attainment during the on-going renewal (*doi moi*) process in Viet Nam.

The research design combined quantitative and qualitative methods in order to understand the complex factors associated with students' educational attainment. I conducted a survey in 360 households of six villages in the Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc province, Viet Nam, from March to September 2001. In addition, I used strategies to capture a range of ethnic, gender and rural variations. Descriptive statistics together with model testing from the surveys of households, teachers and community members, along with interpretive data from informal discussions and focus group interviews, situated the empirical analyses in a socio-cultural context.

This study's central hypothesis is that family and community social capital increases students' educational attainment. The study examined the three types of capital within the family: financial capital, human capital and social capital. Using the logistic regression model I found that the mother's and the father's educational levels and the interaction between parents and children positively influenced the school attendance of children. The analyses of variances (ANOVA) also indicated that family social capital is important to the process of educational attainment, i.e. school attendance and educational achievement. Family social capital, combined with financial and human capital, has added a great deal to the educational attainment for children in Me Linh district. This study goes beyond the traditional status attainment model which concentrates heavily on socioeconomic status.

Given the context of the current renewal in Viet Nam, social capital formation was found to be context specific in this study. Significantly, interpretive data revealed that poor children in rural areas of Viet Nam encountered a variety of problems related to economic constraints, household responsibilities, culture, and inadequate support on the part of schools and communities at large. Some of the problems identified were: rising cost of education, lack of access to educational resources, and irrelevance of education for ethnic minority children.

This research offers several recommendations, such as: (1) Reinforcing the partnership web of family, community and family through educational policies; (2) Narrowing the gap between children from poor and non-poor families in their access to educational resources; (3) Developing strategies to improve the quality of education for all children in Viet Nam, especially for ethnic minority children.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
DETS	District Education and Training Services
EFA	Education for All
FINCAP	Financial Capital
GAP	Grade Point Average
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HUMCAP	Human Capital
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
PETS	Province Education and Training Services
SOCCAP	Social Capital
UNDP	United Nation Development Fund
UNESCO	United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nation Children Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VAC	Garden, Pond and Animal Husbandry
WB	World Bank

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH PROBLEMS

#### 1.1 Introduction

We still have a limited understanding of the factors leading to the large differences in educational attainment in the developing world. This study attempts to gain a better understanding of educational attainment in developing countries by examining the social factors that may help determine educational attainment in Viet Nam. The central problem in this study is whether or not family-and community-based social capital affect Vietnamese students' educational attainment. Given the current context of Viet Nam and my broader view of development theories and educational issues around the world, my research involved an empirical analysis of the connection between family-and community-based social capital and educational attainment during the on-going “renewal” or *doi moi* process.

Launched in the late 1980s, *doi moi* can largely be seen as a new approach to development with the profound impact on Vietnamese education. This approach was intended to “support the establishment of a market economy together with an active integration into the world economy” (UNDP, 2001, p. 3) and reached a major turning point in the 1990s with the drastic government policy of achieving the ambitious goal of “Education for All”. Viet Nam concentrates its energy on the challenges of educational development because education is the fundamental basis for the preparation of its future generations and also because the Vietnamese government places human beings at the center of development. One of the pressing tasks is to achieve a viable economy while seeking harmony in a new dynamic of life.



A number of studies have been done in Viet Nam by both national and outside researchers during this process. However, most studies concern the shift from a centralized economy to a market economy (Nguyen, 1990; Perkin, 1994; Fforde & De Vylder, 1996; Griffin, 1998; and Litvack & Rondinelli, 1999). Focusing mainly on the market environment, trade liberalization and the macro framework, these studies show how Viet Nam has gradually transformed its centralized planned economy to a multiple sector economy. Currently, research studies conducted jointly by the University of British Columbia in Canada and the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities of Viet Nam (*Socioeconomic Renovation in Viet Nam: The Origin, Evolution and Impact of Doi Moi, 2000*) explore the socioeconomic impact of the major policies that *doi moi* has brought. However, there have been very few studies of Vietnamese educational development which document findings using both quantitative and qualitative methods. There have been few recommendations available, and concrete policies for improving educational quality in order to meet increasing challenges of the *doi moi* process have not been proposed.

Past research on educational development in Viet Nam has tended to use macro perspectives almost exclusively, for instance the studies of the UNDP Education Sector Review (1992) and the Viet Nam Education Financing Studies by the World Bank (1996). In an effort to balance that macro research interest, this study is micro-oriented, and devoted to a better understanding of the linkages between family and community-based social capital and educational attainment in Viet Nam using an integrated research perspective. I analyze the concept of social capital theory, family and students'

participation, and the achievements of the junior secondary schools in Viet Nam, specifically in the Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc Province.

## **1.2 Central research problem**

In developed countries, the study of social capital and its linkage with educational attainment has recently increased. Wall *et al* (1998, p. 301) indicate that the strongest interest in using the concept of social capital is found in sociology, economics and education. Many research papers and dissertations in education have been based on Coleman's theoretical framework of social capital (1987, 1988, 1990, and 1994). Previous researchers did not able to fully address how family and community- based social capital affects student achievement. They mainly examined factors such as family wealth and parents' education and occupation (financial and human capital). Coleman hypothesizes that adding another component (social capital) would improve understanding of students' educational attainment (1988). As a result, in most available research studies in the U.S. and other Western countries, a focus has been placed on the relationship between parent involvement and student academic achievement. This focus on parent involvement has been considered a vital element in movements for reforming America's public schools.

In comparison to the burgeoning research on schooling in advanced nations, there are far fewer educational studies of social capital, family, and educational attainment in developing countries. In most developing regions, educational attainment varies widely by gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic conditions. In poor countries the limited data may discourage researchers from conducting empirical research studies. For the same reason, there is little empirical analysis on education in Viet Nam today. Government

agencies in developing nations are often ill-equipped to compile sufficiently comprehensive and reliable data for statistical analysis. The collection of primary data may also be more challenging there. For instance, survey data must be collected in face-to-face interviews because the lack of telephones and unreliable mail systems preclude faster, less-costly survey techniques. As a result, there have been few studies of the Third World that develop a conceptual framework in which to anchor empirical or ethnographic findings in education.

Since most social science theories have been formulated in Western, industrialized societies, they may reflect “an (often unintended) ethnocentric bias against underdeveloped societies and other less studied regions of the world” (Bradshaw & Wallace, 1991, p.155). Certainly, many of the core dimensions of social capital theories may hold across diverse contexts. Case studies of developing countries are useful because they can illuminate the gaps in these theories and their linkages with education (Bradshaw and Wallace, 1991, p.155). In this way, Third World case studies can extend the reach of current social capital theories (with modification) to an ever-larger set of cases and world regions.

This study explores the complex interaction between school, family and community and its influence on educational attainment in Viet Nam today. By drawing on recent theories related to social capital and educational attainment, I develop a conceptual framework to account for the complex interactions between schools, communities and families that influence patterns of educational attainment. This framework extends and refines current theories of education and development in developing countries to make them more comparative and comprehensive in scope. It

promotes a greater understanding of educational attainment in Viet Nam by examining the local and familial factors that determine or contribute to the nature of students' participation and achievement in schools.

Economic and social changes in Viet Nam during the *doi moi* process are currently encouraging a big shift in Vietnamese school systems. In fact, *doi moi* means a set of policies which center the shift to market economy with the aim of getting the country out of the crisis of 1980s. This aim is clearly reflected in the new slogan: "rich people, a strong nation and an equal, democratic and civilized society" (*dan giao, nuoc manh va mot xa hoi cong bang, dan chu va van minh*). The *doi moi* process is complex and it poses an enormous challenge for the whole nation. *Doi moi* has brought certain liberalization to Viet Nam. While the Vietnamese government continues to preserve its socialist orientation, the *doi moi* policy has "focused on the improvement of the enabling environment and has considerably expanded people's choices" (UNDP, 2001, p. 5). There is now an unprecedented diversity in many aspects of people's lives. It was meant to bring about an end to the period of stagnation and introduce a new era of rapid economic growth. A number of new policies are being implemented in different areas and some encouraging results have been achieved while some problems have remained. UNDP highlights that "the human development results of the *doi moi* process are impressive, particularly in the socio-economic domain and bode well for its capacity to take up the many challenges that remain" (UNDP, 2001, p.3).

The *doi moi* process has raised many questions, for instance: does education play a key role in the *doi moi* process? Has education in Viet Nam been regarded as one of the contributing factors to social and economic development? Studying the relationship

between education and social and economic development is not new. There is an assumption that better education raises the quality of the labor force. The changes in demand for skills that occurred during the *doi moi* process pose special challenges for basic and secondary education schools. How do schools change to meet the increasing needs of both the modern sector and non-modern sectors in Viet Nam? Few studies have adequately examined the complex web of relationships between Vietnamese students, teachers, school management, parents, and other community members. Fewer still have examined how these networks affect students' performances. Yet it is just this web of relationships that has been the focus of recent scholarship on the impact of social capital on educational attainment.

To summarize the central research problem: changes brought about by the market-oriented economy, technological changes during the *doi moi* process and intensified international competition are an increasing demand for enhanced academic and life skills on the part of students. Schools are being evaluated based on how effectively they provide these skills. Facing the challenges of the renewal process, the K-12 school system in Viet Nam has been pressed to change with limited resources. Until now, there has been no any research on the linkages between community social capital, parent involvement, and students' educational attainment in Viet Nam. This study is designed to provide some understanding of the factors that link of family- and community-based social capital with educational attainment in expectation that Vietnamese schools will have a more solid basis from which to address the new challenges they face.



### 1.3 Research questions

The main hypothesis of this research is **whether or not social capital has an independent and significant effect on educational attainment**. To test this main hypothesis the following specific research questions were posed:

#### *I. What are key dimensions of community-based social capital?*

- a. What are the groups, associations, and norms functioning at the village level?  
What is the nature of these groups? What roles do they play in people's lives?
- b. What does trust mean at the local level? How can we assess trust levels?
- c. To what extent can the role of educational attainment of children be understood through the concept of community-based social capital?

#### *II. What are the main effects of family-based social capital on children's educational attainment?*

- a. What factors determine whether or not a child regularly attends school?
- b. To what extent are children's learning outcomes associated with financial and human capital within family?
- c. What is the effect of family social capital on educational attainment?
- d. To what extent are the levels of reported social capital associated with human and financial capital?

Certainly the state, through its provision of schooling and formation of educational policies, has a major impact on decisions about schooling. However, non-state actors, such as community organizations and civic groups or the clan may also be as influential in determining educational participation and completion. Because of the *doi*

*moi* process in Viet Nam, the government is not the sole provider of schooling; communities and local self-help groups are directly responsible for building and managing local schools. In such cases, the provision of educational opportunities may vary according to community-level differences in wealth and in their capacity to organize in support of their children.

Having established a framework to conceptualize community social capital in Viet Nam and its linkages with education, my interest in these social-structural elements leads to a second main research question: What are the main effects of family-based social capital on student attainment? If parent involvement is considered as one dimension of social capital, to what extent do family-level processes affect students' attainment, i.e. their participation and achievement in school? More precisely, how do various aspects of the educational system interact with family-level processes to produce different levels of participation and achievement in school for girls and boys from different socioeconomic status and ethnic backgrounds? I sought to determine how the financial, human, and social capital variables might predict educational attainment, controlling for other variables on the same set. Variables included in this study were reliably identified as indicators of financial, human or social capital.

A clarifying question is: What are the relationships among financial, human and social capital? Moderate correlations were expected between family social capital measures and measures of parent human capital and financial capital; the developmental literature indicates that parenting quality is related to other family resources (Masten et al, 1999). It was expected that social capital through the interactions with financial and

human capital would be comprised of multiple dimensions, with broad dimensions of school, family and community relationships.

By addressing these questions, my research examines the interrelatedness of family and community-based social capital in determining educational attainment in Viet Nam. When we understand the complex set of factors shaping educational attainment at the general education level, we can begin to suggest ways of alleviating the barriers to the achievement of educational goals set by the Vietnamese people and government in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **1.4 Vietnamese Rurality as Unique Area of Study**

Most studies of social capital and educational attainment have been conducted in North America and Western countries. Consequently, less is known about the impact of social capital in rural settings in the developing world. Rural areas possess distinctive ecological, social and cultural characteristics. While rural families are more likely than urban ones to have both mother and father present in the household, they are also likely to have more children. Rural communities also differ from urban areas with regard to attitudes toward education. They are much more likely to consist of adults with lower educational attainment and tend to place less value on this (Hobbs, 1995, p.250).

In many ways, Viet Nam is characterized as a society in transition between an agricultural and an industrial economy. Rural areas in Viet Nam have a dense network of human social relations, for instance, interaction among local villagers, clan and kinship, which is one of the elements on which this study is based. In Viet Nam, the dramatic socio-economic renewal process (*doi moi*) has promoted a steady rate of improvement in agricultural and rural development for more than a decade (Boothroyd & Pham, 2000, p.

21). Considerable progress has been made in the countryside with regard to educational institutions. In 1994, for example, 98.8 percent of all communes had elementary schools, while 76.6 percent had secondary schools (Boothroyd & Pham, 2000, p. 22). The study in rural areas can provide important insights into what the country might experience in the future. My field research work in Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc province in 2001 helped me to examine the nature of social relationships within the family and community and their mutual relationship to educational attainment in this rural setting.

### **1.5 Conceptual Framework**

The analytical framework for this study is based on social capital theory. Social capital has been defined and operationalized in many manners in the past two decades (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 1998, and Nan Lin, 2001). The idea of capital resources is fairly easy to understand: capital resources are physical materials, financial resources, and human skills and capacities that facilitate productive activity. They are commonly referred to as physical, financial, and human capital.

Of particular interest to education is the social capital model introduced by James Coleman (1988; 1990; 1991; 1994) which provides a conceptual framework allowing for the analysis of interactions among individuals on educational outcomes. While it is commonly understood that physical, financial, and human capital are resources that facilitate productivity, Coleman asserts that social capital constitutes a fourth type of capital resource. Coleman argues that (1990, p. 301), social capital is an important determinant of student achievement, helping bring about improvement in the educational credentials of youth. Through his studies in 1987 and 1988, Coleman indicates that some

parents, even though they may come from lower social class and ethnic minority groups, are devoted to helping their children's learning because they have high educational expectations for their children. Most social science researchers have come up with the idea that if capital is defined as assets available for use in the production of further assets, then social capital, in the educational context, can be broadly viewed as the use of social interconnectedness to produce better educational outcomes-- unarguably an asset to families and communities (Coleman, 1990; Smith, 1993; Narayan, 1997; Lin, 2001).

Following Coleman's concept of the relationship between social capital and education achievement, there have been a number of studies conducted in Northern America on this topic. The dissertation by Smith and his subsequent research (Smith, 1993 and Smith *et al*, 1995) on family characteristics, social capital, and college attendance in American rural areas, for example, expands the theoretical-educational framework of social capital theory. Smith emphasizes both structural and "process aspects" of social capital. The process aspect of social capital is viewed as the set of relationships within families and communities that serve to facilitate or constrain individual behavior in a manner consistent with the interests of both individuals and the social structure (Smith, 1993. p. 55). The structure of relationships within the family and the community helps determine the frequency and opportunities for interpersonal interaction. Thus, according to Smith, both structural and process elements are an integral part of social capital (Smith *et al*, 1995).

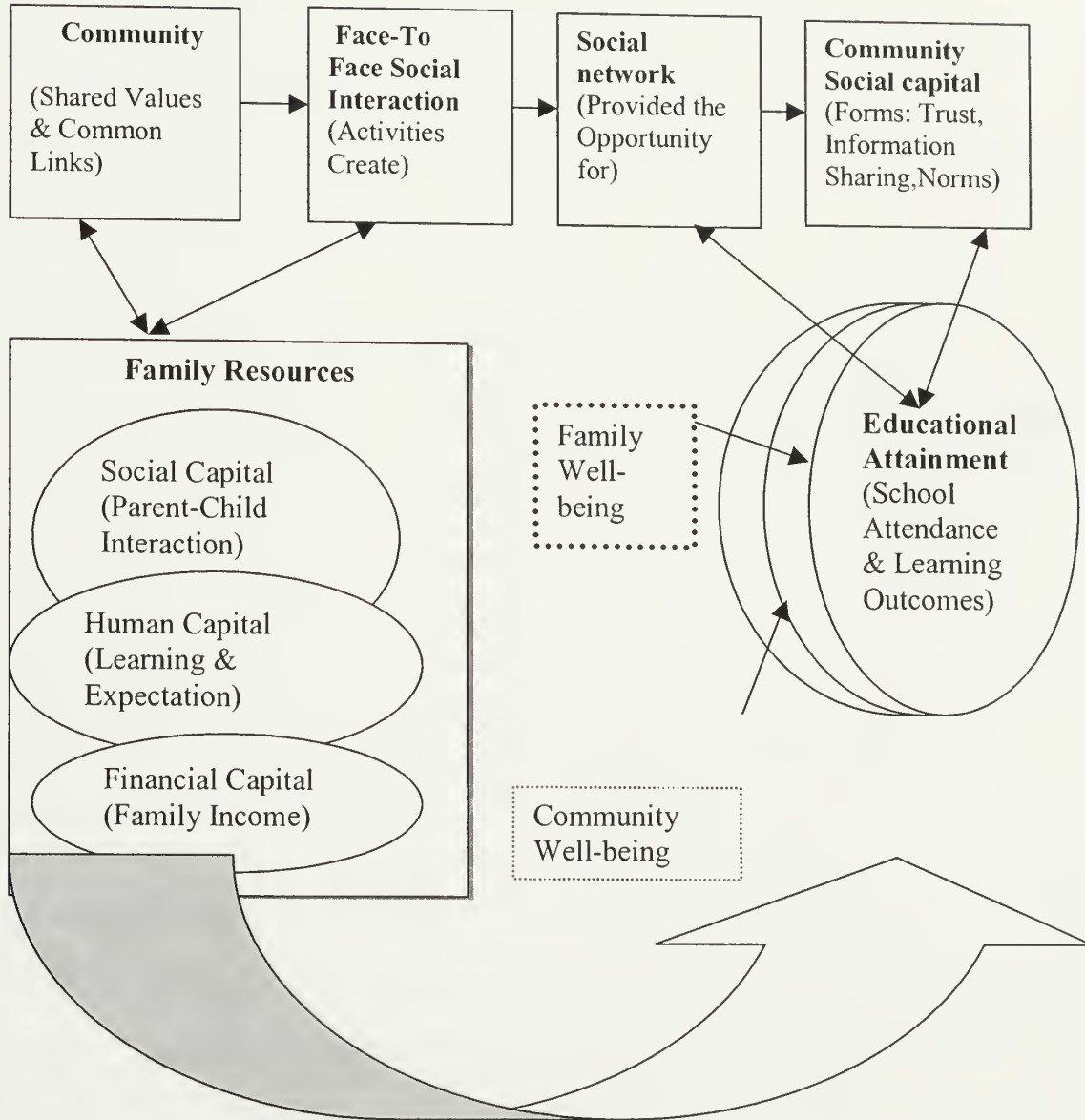
While social capital theories have been formed mainly by western researchers, this study conceptualizes the construct of social capital in the rural context of contemporary Viet Nam. These dimensions of social capital are discussed in chapter



Two. The conceptual model (see Figure 1) illustrates the framework by which community social capital and family social capital, together with family resources affect student learning outcomes. The underlying assumption in this theoretical framework is that community social capital in the form of trust, information sharing, and norms is created within social networks by people who interact face-to face as a result of activities within a community united by shared values and common links. At the household level, ‘social capital’ refers to the parent-child interaction and homework help; and ‘human capital’ represents parents’ education and expectation; and ‘financial capital’ refers to family income. Community dimensions interact with family human and social capital to influence children’s learning outcomes. The children’s learning outcomes affect the family well-being and community well-being. This model has generally supported Coleman’s hypothesis that social capital from the family and community is related to children’s human capital production.



**Figure 1: Social capital Formation in a Community and Family**



In summary, social capital in its various forms and contexts has emerged as one of the most salient concepts in the social sciences. The above section reviewed social capital as discussed in the literature, especially in its relationship to education. While there have been different views and different perspectives on this theory, a fundamental consensus is that social capital is derived from the embedded resources of a social network. In regard to educational attainment, as in the context of family, community social capital can be influenced by the presence and strength of structural and process elements within families and locality. Among the structural attributes are size of family, family background, and population diversity. These structural elements provide opportunities for interaction at the family and local level. The process components of family and community-based social capital can be seen in the social norms, networks, and interactions between adult community members and children that support, enforce, or facilitate educational attainment.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

This dissertation takes advantage of numerous types of data and quantitative and qualitative methods to explore dimensions of family and community-based social capital and educational attainment. The study comes out of the field research that I conducted in Me Linh district from March to September 2001. It used a household survey of 360 households in six villages of Me Linh district to capture information about household factors, the educational experiences of individual children, and the commitment of the community toward education. The analysis has been based not only on secondary district-level data, but also on an accumulation of primary data gathered through sample surveys with questionnaires, observation, and interviews with focus groups. The

educational documents, the surveys, and the interviews provided an opportunity for triangulation. Ethnographic data gathered through informal discussions and interviews was used to illustrate “process elements” which the regression models cannot incorporate. While this analysis employs several quantitative techniques, procedures and survey data, it also uses descriptive details from qualitative sources to complement and enrich empirical findings. Descriptive statistics from the surveys of households, teachers and community members, along with interpretive data from informal discussions and group interviews, situate the quantitative analyses in a substantive context.

Combining both methods has been helpful in this study because quantitative data often provides the most reliable information on which planning decisions are based. Qualitative data helps understand the process mechanisms in which relations among variables are established. The outcome of these methods is a study that bridges the gap between qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to understand the complex set of factors determining differences in educational attainment in Viet Nam today.

### **1.7 Purpose and contribution of the study**

The general objective of the research is to gain a more complete and grounded understanding of family and community social capital and to identify its effects on students' educational attainment of the junior secondary school in contemporary Viet Nam. Existing research and personal experience led me believe that there is a linkage between social capital and student attainment. The purpose of this study is threefold. This research intends to enhance the theoretical development of educational research in Viet Nam. First, it should help the clarification of the concepts of family- and community-based social capital in the Vietnamese context during the *doi moi* process.

Second, it attempts to apply these concepts to the Vietnamese educational environment. Finally, the research provides suggestions for on-going educational reform in Viet Nam.

#### **Definition of Terms:**

*Financial capital* is defined as wealth and family income level. It includes also a measure of the material used for the roof of the house.

*Human capital* is defined by parents' level of education and perceptions of the value of education for their children.

*Social capital* is defined as the relationship between parents and their children, the interaction among parents and parental involvement in the educational process for their children.

*Attainment* is defined as school attendance on a daily regular basis as well as the level of academic performance using GPA scores as the yardstick.

### **1.8 Organization of this dissertation**

Chapter Two provides a review of the existing social science literature on social capital and education. It also discusses the shortage of research available on developing countries and presents my work to help meet the need for information on social capital and educational attainment. Chapter Three situates Viet Nam in a historical and cultural context in order to fully understand the socio-economic changes of the *doi moi* process. The discussion pays particular attention to the contemporary educational system in Viet Nam which has undergone significant change through this phase of development. Chapter Four describes the process of data collection and the types of data used for this study, including national and district-level secondary data, ethnographic data, and a household survey. The research site and the research procedures are discussed in detail.

Measurements of variables as well as a description of in-depth interviews are addressed in order to test hypotheses and research questions.

Chapter Five and Chapter Six discuss and analyze the results of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. These chapters also contain the empirical analyses of this dissertation and test the hypothesized relationships between family, community, and social-structural factors and educational attainment. These also discuss how community norms and family values constitute an important form of social capital with implications for the school learning environment and students' academic achievement. Chapter Seven summarizes the findings of the study and revisits the theoretical concerns raised in Chapter Two. It discusses the implications of the findings for policy planners and future research on education in developing countries. It also suggests how multiple methods for the study of educational systems and social capital can be used in future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

This study is inspired by social capital theory and its linkage to student educational attainment. In this chapter, I first review social capital theory along with research that provides a primary theoretical orientation. In reviewing the social capital literature, I focus on the aspects of social capital pertaining to education and present my own concept of social capital. Since social capital theory has been written and developed in the western literature, there are few research studies focusing on developing countries. Therefore, a need for a comprehensive model of social capital and educational attainment is crucial to redefine the concept for use in educational contexts in developing countries.

#### **2.1 Three main sources on social capital theory**

There are many current debates about the concept of social capital. Researchers from different disciplines have advanced various arguments based on their specific positions. The idea of capital resources is fairly easy to understand: capital resources are physical materials, financial resources, and human skills and capacities that facilitate productivity. They are commonly referred to as physical, financial, and human capital. Coleman (1988, p. 98) asserts that relationships among people constitute a fourth type of capital resource: social capital. The use of the term social capital in contemporary literature can be broken down into three distinct categories in the social sciences. These approaches have been identified by Pierre Bourdieu (1986, 1990, and 1993); James Coleman (1987, 1988, 1991 and 1994) and Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, and 2000). While Bourdieu focuses on strategies for maintaining or changing one's position in a



hierarchical social structure, James Coleman finds an implicit connection to economic rationality and human capital, and Robert Putnam identifies a strong impulse to civic responsibility.

### **2.1.1 Pierre Bourdieu**

Pierre Bourdieu was one of the first scholars to define the social capital concept as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Bourdieu reveals that he first became interested in the idea of social and cultural capital when starting to examine the unequal scholastic achievement among children in different social classes. He was dissatisfied with the human capital theorists' explanation because it tended to disregard the structural barriers facing families with limited income and disadvantaged positions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Portes (1998, p. 45) explains that because this article was written in French, it did not at first garner widespread attention in the English-speaking world. Portes argues that Bourdieu's analysis is “the most theoretically refined among those that introduced the term in contemporary sociological discourse” (p.45). One of the salient features lies in Bourdieu's argument that “social capital resides in relationships”, and “relationships are created through exchange” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). The pattern of linkages and the relationships built through them are the foundation for social capital.

Bourdieu considers social capital to be one of a number of separate, though related forms of capital. He develops his ideas by defining various forms of capital:

Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital which is immediately convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property right; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational

qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243)

Bourdieu uses the concept of capital as a major analytic apparatus and describes the social world as “accumulated history of capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). The important and insightful elements of Bourdieu’s argument is the notion of *convertibility among forms of capital*. That is the way in which different types of capital can be transformed from one form to another and transferred from one generation to the next. In fact, the notion of transformable capital can help us understand the link between home, school and community as well as the connection between parental involvement and student attainment. For instance, parents with various forms of capital foster different types of involvement in their children’s education. Parents can invest their income to buy books or computers, or to hire private tutors. They can use their knowledge to supervise their children’s homework or to volunteer in the school. Parents with professional career or significant social networks may occupy a better position in which to negotiate with school personnel and grasp important information for their children. Parents’ appearance can affect the pattern of interaction between parents and teachers, and so on. If the convertibility of capital is understood, the notion of different capitals should be clear.

From his work in 1986, 1990 and 1993, within the general framework on capital, Bourdieu introduced the concept of the *cultural capital*. Cultural capital can exist in the embodied state as long-lasting dispositions of mind and body; in the objectified state as cultural goods (i.e. books and pictures); and in the institutionalized state, primarily as educational qualifications “a degree” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243). According to Bourdieu, the amount of cultural capital that can be acquired or accumulated depends on the time

periods, the society, and the social class and the “appropriating capacities of individual agents”(Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). This implies that different kinds of society value different types of cultural capital. Cultural capital includes not only elements of “high culture” such as appreciation of fine art and literature but also common stocks of knowledge of how to get along in everyday social life. Therefore, instead of members of different classes having different amounts of cultural capital, middle class and working class individuals can be thought of as possessing and expressing different kinds of cultural capital. In fact, the concept of cultural capital has received more emphasis than that of social capital both within Bourdieu’s original formulation and in his late work.

Bourdieu views social capital as the actual or potential resource available through a network of relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, for example, through membership in a group or organization. Social capital provides an actor access to the financial, cultural, and social capital of other group members (1986, p. 249). He notes that social capital is part of a more complex and intricate social network that situates the individual’s position with regard to his/her possession of available social, economic, and cultural capital. Bourdieu’s general treatment of the different types of capital helps position social capital relative to financial, human, and cultural capital, and demonstrates the need for a concept that recognizes the productive potential of social relationships.

Mouzelies (1995, p. 3) notes that Bourdieu's version of social capital represents a universal conceptual tool leading to “context-sensitive, historically-oriented comparative investigations” which provide insights into how social reality is “constituted, reproduced, and transformed.”

Bourdieu's formulation of social capital suggests that the failure to explicitly treat human resources as a form of capital has resulted in a major underestimation of the growth rate of capital and has led to a misunderstanding of the determinants of economic growth. There are ways to consider cultural storehouses of knowledge and the social networks that influence social and economic development. The great interest in the concept of social capital in recent years is an indication of the search for some of the large variances that remain unexplained in the realms of sociology, neoclassical economics or human capital theory in dealing with human development.

Some researchers argue that Bourdieu's theory does not suggest a direct link between social origins and social practices. For instance, the notion of social capital associated with class is only one of the potential factors impinging on the practice of parental involvement in education. Empirical studies (e.g. Brown, 1991; Mac Lead, 1987) suggest that individual parents or certain ethnic-minority groups, even though they have scarce resources, may choose to devote their limited time and energy to maximize their involvement in their children's education. In such cases, Bourdieu's concept of class-related social capital seems to be insufficient in explaining these individual differences (Harker *et al*, 1993). In addition, Smart (1993, p.392) notes that Bourdieu's concept of social capital is necessarily vague and immeasurable because the only way to know social capital exists, or is instrumental in increasing economic capital or educational attainment, is after the fact. The issue of measurement of social capital will be addressed in sections below.

### 2.1.2 Coleman

Like Bourdieu, James S. Coleman, a leading sociologist at the University of Chicago, introduces the concept of social capital in his 1988 article *Social capital in the creation of human capital* in American Journal of Sociology 1988, and translates technical terms from economics into sociology. In fact, his paper has gained a wide audience and acceptance in sociology and related fields<sup>1</sup>. The use of the term social capital has been particularly widespread in educational research. The concept of social capital is proposed as an extension of the human capital framework.

Social capital shares some attributes with other forms of capital. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive. Coleman (1988) argues, “Its presence makes possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (p. S 98). However, its intangible quality makes social capital different from other capital resources. Coleman indicates, “Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors; it is not lodged either in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production” (p. S 98). He explains further, “If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the relations among persons” (pp. S 100-101). He writes that social capital consists of aspects of the social structure which facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure. He identifies three forms of social capital: (1) obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of structures; (2) information channel and norms; and (3) effective sanctions. He explains that

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<sup>1</sup> An electronic search in the Social Sciences Citation Index of articles published in the last decade since the appearance of Coleman's paper reveals at least 210 articles citing Coleman's 1988 piece and 88 articles including the term 'social capital' in their titles



“obligations” can be conceived of as a credit slip held by people which can be called in if necessary; “information channels” concern the channels of information that provide an important basis for action through the use of social relations; and “social norms” provides the criteria to reward or sanction individual actions. Therefore, in a group with high social capital there are expectations for honest behavior on the part of members of the group. If expectations are met with the trustworthy behavior of the group’s members, a network of relations provide access to information and accepted standards of norms, behavior and conduct can be effectively enforced. In his work on social capital (1988, 1990 & 1994), Coleman seeks to suggest the utility of the concepts.

In Coleman’s explanation, “both social capital in the family and social capital in the community can play roles in the creation of human capital in the rising generation” (Coleman, 1988, S. 109). He argues that investing in the relationships that create social capital is critical to the successful development of children. As he put it:

This investment in human capital of children occurs by applying the social and financial resources of adults toward the development of productive skills in children. It can be quite simply described as the investment of the social and financial capital of one generation toward the creation of human capital in the next generation. The social capital consists of the social relationships within the family and the community that generate the attention and time spent by parents and community members in the development of children and youth. (Coleman, 1994, p, 35-36)

This assertion can be more fully explained by looking specifically at family-based and community-based social capital.

### **Family-based social capital**

Based on empirical research, Coleman and his associates employed the concept of social capital when researching the factors associated with dropping out of high school, using their “High School and Beyond” data set (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). They



found that even after controlling for students' socio-economic status (as measured by their parents education and income levels), there was a great deal of unexplained variation in dropout behavior. Coleman and Hoffer recognized that families provide not only human and financial capital to facilitate students' educational attainment but also social capital. They held social capital to be present in the family in both the quantity and quality of interaction between parent and child -- particularly in the interaction that promotes positive educational achievement by the child.

Coleman developed operational indicators of social capital at the family level. Based on the assumption that different family structures created different levels of social capital available for children, Coleman analyzes social capital into six components: the parents' presence in the home (two parents or a single parent); the number of additional children present; the different combinations of parents and siblings; the mother's expectation for a child's education; the mobility of the family; and church attendance. He discovers that when social capital is high -- that is, when both parents are present in the home with one sibling, a mother expects the child to attend college, and there is a religious affiliation -- then school drop-out rates are low.

Coleman notes that family-based social capital is present when social relationships among parents and children are strong. In order for such relationships to be built and maintained, Coleman (1988) argues that parents must not only be physically present in the household but also must be willing and able to spend time with and give attention to their children. Thus, family-based social capital depends on both family structure—the physical presence of parents—and the process of family relationships—time and attention spent with children.

The number of siblings in the household is a considerable variable related to family structure and serves to facilitate or constrain the building and maintenance of social capital in the home. As the number of siblings increases in a family, “adult attention to individual children is diluted” (Coleman, 1988, p. S110). This argument is consistent with findings that conclude that measures of achievement such as IQ “declines with sibling position, even when total family size is controlled, and that scores decline with number of children in the family” (Coleman, 1988, p. S112). Thus, in studies of social capital and educational attainment, the number of siblings is often used as a measure of family-based social capital.

Coleman (1988) also contends that non-traditional family structure, such as that resulting from divorce or single-parent childbearing, decreases the amount of social capital available to children and adolescents. For example, he sees the rise in single-parents households as contributing to a decline in family-based social capital. The argument here is that one parent, especially one that is working outside the home to support the family, simply does not have the time that two parents would have to spend with their children.

While Coleman (1991) obviously believes strongly in the importance of social capital for the successful development of children and youth, he does not disregard the importance of other forms of social capital, especially with regard to education. He states,

All forms of capital—financial, human, and social – are important for children’s education. There have, however, been changes over time in the quantity of each of these forms of capital: In general, financial and physical capital has grown, as has human capital, but social capital has declined. (Coleman, 1991, p. 8).

Coleman pays particular attention to the growth in human capital since parents' education has been found to affect the educational achievement of children (Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1982). However, he believes that regardless of the human capital levels possessed by parents, unless they are able and willing to spend time and effort with their children, their level of human capital is less relevant. Given that Coleman and his associates conducted their studies in U.S. High Schools, their findings were based on the American social contexts.

In summary, family-based social capital is embedded in strong relationships between parents and children or youth. It requires a family structure which relies on the presence of adults, preferably both parents, in the household. However, mere presence is not enough. Time and attention are critical components to the buildings and maintenance of family-based social capital. Number of siblings and contact with extended family may also affect levels of family-based social capital. In addition, parents' levels of human capital affect children only to the extent that family-based social capital is present. If the human capital or financial capital possessed by a parent is employed exclusively at work or elsewhere outside the home and is not complemented by social capital embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to a child's education growth that the parents have a great deal or a small amount of human capital.

### **Community-based social capital**

While family-based social capital is crucial to successful youth development, Coleman (1988, 1991, 1994) argues that community-based social capital is important as well. He indicates that social capital outside the family is found in the community, which consists of "the social relationships that exist among parents, in the closure exhibited by

this structure of relations, and in the parents relations' with the institutions of the community" (1988, p. S 113). In fact, Coleman (1991) states that extensive community-based social capital can help to offset the absence of family-based social capital in particular families. As an example, Coleman cites research which indicates that children from single-parent families, who presumably have a lower level of family-based social capital, are more similar to their two-parent counterparts in both achievement and continuation in school when their schools are in communities with extensive community-based social capital (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

Like family-based social capital, community-based social capital is found in strong social relations. However, these relations extend outside the family and exist among parents and other children, in "network closure" among community members, and in family relations with community institutions such as civic organizations, churches, and schools (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Network closure does two things for people in the closed network. First, it affects access to information. Second, network closure facilitates sanctions that make it less risky for people in the network to trust one another (Coleman, 1990, p. 310 and 1988, p. S104).

Similar to family-based social capital, the development of community-based social capital depends upon both structure and process. The community's structure must provide opportunities for direct interaction and the process must create feelings of trust, expectations, and obligations. Coleman also notes two properties of social structure which facilitate social capital: "the closure of the social network and the appropriable social organization" (Coleman, 1988, p.S 106). Particularly, Coleman is interested in intergenerational closure, or the extent to which parents know their children's friends and

are friends with the parents of their children's friends. This type of closure allows for communication and monitoring of behavior within their group. By appropriable social organization, Coleman refers to a situation where a relationship with a person in one social setting can serve as resource in another setting. For example, a social club might end up being a source of employment information or financial assistance to its members, although it was not designed for this purpose.

Coleman finds that appropriable social organization is most likely to exist when relations within a collectivity are "multiplex," rather than "simplex." In multiplex relations, the actors in the relationship know one another in multiple ways (as neighbor, fellow parent, fellow worker, fellow church visitors, etc.) so that the resources from one aspect of the relationship can be appropriated for use in others (Coleman, 1988, p. S 109).

In the context of youth development, network and civic engagement provide opportunities for adults to set standards of behavior for children, "to make and enforce rules that are similar from family to family, and to provide social support for their own and each others' children in times of distress" (Coleman, 1991, p.10). This is largely accomplished through establishing closure among parents of children and youth. For example, let us assume that Child A and Child B are friends. If Parent A and Parent B know and trust one another through involvement in a church, a town hall meeting, or the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), they have achieved closure in their relationship. As Coleman (1991) puts it:

When this loop is closed, where the social structure among the parents exhibits closure in this way, Parent A and Parent B can set norms and standards for their children, can compare notes about rules for their children, and are not vulnerable to their children's exploitation of ignorance about what rules exist for other children. In addition, Parent A can provide support for Child B when necessary, and can sometime serve as a bridge if the child's communication with his or her



own parent has broken down. In short, each parent constitutes a capital asset both for other parents in the community and for children in the community.

(Coleman, 1991, p.11)

It is, in large part, through such closure that community norms are developed. In addition to involvement in civic groups which result in network closure, other factors may influence the development of community-based social capital. One important element is family mobility. Each time a family moves to a new community, the social relations that constitute community-based social capital are broken and must be re-established in a new setting. Whatever the degree of closure available to others in the community, it is not readily available to parents in mobile families (Coleman, 1991, p.13).

Community- based social capital is not only built by parents but by the involvement of children and youth in community-based activities. Young people who are engaged in church, school, and volunteer activities are more likely to have access to the time and attention of adults in the community and, consequently, to feel more attached to adults outside the family. As was the case with the building and maintenance of family-based social capital, community-based social capital is built through adult investment of time and attention in children and youth. Productive activities outside the home provide opportunities for youth to receive that time and attention.

It is important to state that Coleman developed the social capital concept from a rational-choice framework in the U.S. context. In Coleman's rational actor framework, social structure itself emerges out of interactions entered by individuals in pursuit of their own interests (Coleman, 1990, p. 300). In Coleman's scheme, social structure becomes social capital when appropriable by an actor for effective use in furtherance of her



interests (Coleman, 1990, pp. 302-305). For instance, Coleman points out that social capital requires a conception of obligation or commitment on the part of individuals to a larger group. Although such commitment can be conceived of as part of rational behavior on the part of individuals, it requires some conceptualization of solidarity or social relations between individuals. Therefore, Coleman's formulation on social capital raises a great interest among scholars in the western countries.

In summary, community-based social capital is embedded in strong social relationships outside the family and within the locality in which each one lives. It requires a structure which provides opportunity for direct social interaction among community members – both adults and children. This interaction, or process, facilitates trust and results in closure of relationships. Portes highlights that Coleman's essays have "the undeniable merit" of introducing and giving visibility to social capital in American sociology and for identifying some of the mechanism through which it is generated (Portes, 1998, p. 47). In the field of education, Coleman's concept of social capital provides a unique approach for examining successful youth development because it attempts to integrate seemingly disparate disciplinary explanations into a theory that holds family and community social relations, and the "capital" that these relations produce, at its center (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995, p. 585).

### **2.1.3 Putnam**

Following Coleman, Robert Putnam, a political scientist at Harvard University, has redefined social capital as a key characteristic of communities rather than of individuals. Putnam credits Coleman for the development of the concept, but wished to apply it at a different level of social organization than Coleman and other educational

researchers. While Coleman and Bourdieu primarily discussed social capital as property of individuals, families, or communities, Putnam used the concept to refer to general properties of communities or even societies.

Through a study conducted in Italy (1993), Robert Putnam argues that the large number of voluntary associations among people in Northern Italy explains the regions' economic growth. His empirical investigation is a study of differing performances of 20 regional governments in Italy. Putnam asks why, in their 20 year history, the regional governments of northern Italy had initiated more innovative programs and engendered greater satisfaction amongst their constituents than those in southern Italy (1993). One hypothesis he considered was that the level of socio-economic development in a region was a precursor and determinant of institutional (or government) performance. From this study, Putnam argues that social capital is a "set of horizontal associations" among people that have an effect on the productivity of the community. These associations include a "network of civic engagement" (Putnam, 1993, p. 35).

Putnam defines social capital as "features of social organizations, such as trust, norm, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam, 1993, p, 167). Measuring social capital by voting patterns, newspaper readership, and participation in sports and cultural associations, the study by Putnam in Italy shows that communities with high stock of social capital would be safer, cleaner, wealthier, and more literate than those with low stock. He indicates, "working together is easier in a community blessed with substantial stock of social capital" (p.35). Members in communities with a high stock of social capital are able to find and keep good jobs,

and initiate projects serving public interests. Community members help enforce contractual agreements and use existing resources more efficiently.

For Putnam, social capital consists of the following components. First is networks, which together constitute the civic community (institutions, facilities and relationships) in the voluntary, state, and personal spheres, and the density of the networking between these three spheres. Second, people's sense of "belonging" to the civic community, together with the sense of solidarity and equality with other community members. Third, norms of cooperation, reciprocity and trust which govern the functions of networks (this links with Coleman's formulation, 1988). Putnam argues that "trust is an essential component of social capital" because it "lubricates cooperation." In a meeting on trust in 1995, Putnam clarifies: "Participation in dense network of horizontal interactions of relative equals produces norms of reciprocity, provides sanctions for defectors, offers some information about others and create a 'culturally-defined template for future collaboration'" (Levi, 1996, p, 47). This indicates, that trust, in Putnam's logic, reflects neither altruism nor "irrational" expectation/obligation, but a productive and calculated 'interest'. Hardin echos this idea on trust when she described, "I trust you because it is in your interest to do what I trust you to do" (Hardin, 1993, p. 505-506). Putnam emphasized that social capital is "a moral resource" (1993, p. 169). This, I believe, is critical. The notion is that social capital should reflect primarily a system of values, especially social trust. Warrant (1999, p.3) articulates that in most social capital arguments, trust is a key element of civil society's capacities. He said, "trust is to direct and discipline government, as well as to organize and coordinate collective action."

Serageldin and Grootaert (2000, p. 45) highlight the two assumptions introduced by Putnam underlying the concept of social capital. For Putnam, social capital is defined by the fact that "it facilitates coordination and cooperation for the mutual benefit of the members of the association" (Putnam, 1993, p.36). Putnam holds social capital to be an aspect of social organization including trust, norms, and network (all of which enhance co-operative actions) that persists in the long run. Social capital can increase with use and diminish when not in use. He argues that the level of social capital is a causal factor explaining economic growth. Social capital is crucial in building a civic community, which, in Putnam's words, is "marked by an active, public-spirited citizenry, by egalitarian political relations, and by a social fabric of trust and cooperation" (Putnam, 1993, p. 170). Vibrant networks and norms of civic engagement are essential for such a community.

In general, there are a number of ways social capital is used in academic discourse based on the work of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam. Bourdieu focuses on class formations, or specific social "fields;" Coleman looks at aspects ranging from families to formal organizations; and Putnam analyzes social capital in large regions. Coleman's and Putnam's ideas on social capital can be closely linked, because both of them treat social capital as a public good and a community resource (Coleman, 1990a, p. 311; Putnam, 1993, p. 176). Wall summarizes that in most respects, these three authors have tended to assume that broad social goals/norms exist and that their pursuit and legitimacy provide the means necessary for attainment (Wall *et al.*, 1998, pp.312-13). For Bourdieu, the goal is one of sub-group or individual power over others; for Coleman, the goal is increasing individual human capital and therefore socioeconomic prosperity; for Putnam, the goal is

establishing democratic institutions. Although these three authors have distinctive approaches to social capital, they share some very broad understandings of the meaning of social capital, such as its status as a resource, its capacity to be goal-oriented, and as a means of social control.

Based on the work of these above three authors and from other scholars, Lin (2001, p. 6) asserts that the underlying premise behind the notion of social capital is straightforward: “investment in social relations with expected returns.” We understand that social capital is diverse in origin and in interpretation. Although there are different arguments that have been generated from many social science disciplines, there is a general agreement on social capital metaphor. Lin identifies that social capital holds social structure as a kind of capital that can create advantages for individuals or groups in pursuing their goals (Lin, 2001, p. 6). For instance, access to social capital means that people have connections to each other and that they might help themselves with advice, further connections, loan and so on. As the concept is evolving, the following section addresses directly its linkage with education, particularly educational attainment.

## **2.2 Research on Social Capital and Education Attainment**

A number of studies in North America have used many of Coleman’s formulations in carrying out other investigations into social capital. In particular, numerous studies on the links between education and social capital have been conducted over the last decade. The studies have attempted to measure social capital empirically (in terms such as number of parents, number of siblings, church attendance, family mobility [Smith, Beaulieu & Seraphine, 1995; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Duncan & Hoffert, 1995; Beaulieu & Israel, 1997; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001]).



Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) in a study of at-risk youth (in this case, the adolescent children of teenage mothers) suggest that “Coleman’s notion of social capital is attractive because it provides a conceptual link between the attributes of individual actors and their immediate social contexts, most notably the household, school, and neighborhood. It also has the potential to link the overly narrow purview of psychology and the overly broad purview of sociology and can help to identify ways in which parental investment is enhanced or undermined by the presence or absence of community resource” (Furstenberg and Hughes, 1995, p. 582). They emphasize the multi-dimensional nature of social capital and its effects on academic success.

Smith, in his dissertation (1993) and in a subsequent article (Smith *et al.* 1995), refines Coleman’s findings. Using Coleman’s methodology (the same national survey), Smith compares urban, suburban, and rural communities to predict college attendance. Smith evaluates drop-out behavior among students in the South. As measures of family social capital, he considers factors such as the number of siblings per student, whether the mother worked while the child was young, whether there were one or two parents in the household, whether the mother expected the student to attend college, and whether the student reported talking with parents about personal matters. Measures of community social capital were the number of moves the family had made since fifth grade, whether the student was involved in youth activities, whether he/she was involved in church activities, and the level of parental interest in school activities (Smith, 1993).

Smith offers the insight that social capital entails both the structure of social relationships and the process of social interaction. Smith *et al* (1995) also point out that the distinctive feature of social capital setting it apart from concepts such as social



integration or social support is the idea of investment: investment in the structure and process of interaction yields human capital dividends. The structural measures are the presence of one or two parents in the household and whether the mother works outside the household. Structure determines the opportunity for interpersonal interaction, as well as for their frequency and duration.

The “process” measure involves indicators such as whether the parents expect the child to attend college, whether the parents monitor the child’s work, and whether the parents monitor the child’s general activities. Smith identifies, “the process aspect of social capital as represented by the set of relationships within the families and communities that serve to facilitate or constrain individual behavior in a manner consistent with the interests of both individuals and the social structure” (Smith, 1993, p. 55). He found that the process measures had larger and more consistent effects on college attendance than the structural factors across all places of residence categories (urban, suburban, and rural). Process not only incorporates “parents’ nurturing activities but also includes efforts intended to constrain inappropriate behavior by their children” (Smith *et al*, 1995, p.370). Nurturing activities are represented by parents assisting their child with homework, discussing important school activities with him or her, and encouraging their child to attend college. These also include limiting the child’s television viewing, having adult supervision for the child when she or he returns from school, and monitoring.

Brown’s (1995) study on school voluntarism supports Coleman’s argument and provides a further elaboration of the concept of social capital. His study demonstrates that social capital nurtured by school volunteers has the capacity to generate rewards and

institute norms and sanctions that are much more powerful than the child's parents can provide on their own. He suggests that as parents donate their time to schools, they gain information about the process of schooling and consequently the students benefit from the contact with parents of other children. Two norms evolve: children should value learning and children should care for others. The obligations, information channels, and learning and caring norms are important indicators of social capital from which children can benefit considerably (Brown, 1995, pp. 42-44).

Another piece of research on social capital and education in the Coleman tradition is that by Bankston (*Education and Ethnicity in an Urban Vietnamese Village*, 1997). Bankston looked at academic achievement among Vietnamese-American adolescents in New Orleans. He hypothesised that differences in academic achievement might be attributable to different patterns of relationships within the ethnic community rather than individual- or family-level characteristics of the students. Through his study, Bankston found a significant correlation between academic achievement and the Vietnamese ethnic community. The main measure of social capital in this study was parental and student involvement in the ethnic community, measured by church attendance and membership in community organizations. Both parent and student involvement had positive effects on students' grades. From Bankston's data set, he provided evidence that academic achievement among Vietnamese young people was positively related to students' time spent on homework and to their involvement in the distinctive community.

With regard to community social capital, Beaulieu and Israel (1997) found community structure had a significant impact on rural students. In their analysis, students from southern communities and those who attend school within a district that is

composed of at least half minority students increased their chances of dropping out of high school by 50% and 80% percent, respectively. Beaulieu and Israel hypothesized that “these variables serve as proxies for structural disadvantages associated with rural places, such as high levels of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, limited availability of good jobs or people with decent educational levels. The structural deficiencies severely limit a community’s capacity to establish and enforce norms and values that place a premium on the educational success of local youth” (Beaulieu & Israel, 1997, p. 212).

As for community process, family mobility was found to be an important determinant in dropping out of high school by Beaulieu and Israel (1997). They found that students “subjected to moving from one school to another since entering the first grade are much more likely to be high school drop-outs.” (p. 203). In fact, for rural students, they found that those who changed schools because of a move four or more times since first grade had a dropout rate three times higher than those who never moved. In their further analysis, Israel *et al* (2001) have empirically investigated the relationship between social capital and educational attainment.

From data of the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS)<sup>2</sup>, they used three indicators: a composite math/reading test score, base year grade average, and staying in school. They found that both process and structural attributes of family social

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<sup>2</sup> NELS’s study was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center for the National Center for Educational Statistic. The NELS’ study in 1988, involved a stratified national probability sample of more than 1, 052 schools in U.S. Linked to the student surveys, there were nearly 22, 700 parents surveyed with information on family characteristics, parents’ views of their children’s school experiences, family life, and expectations for their children. In this analysis, the researchers combined data from NELS base year data with key 1990 census data to describing community structural attributes. They admitted there was a slight time lag between the data sets, however, they assume these data are representative, given the small yearly changes in census data. ( Isreal et al, 2001, p. 49)

capital are key factors affecting high school students' educational achievement. They found that process and structural attributes of community-based social capital also help youth to excel, though they contribute less strongly to achievement. They indicated that children who haven't moved much from first grade, and who are engaged in group activities through their church or elsewhere, and whose parents know their friends' parents, tend to do better in school. On the basis of these results, they indicated "that the process attributes of family social capital apparently are important in shaping a child's academic performance" (Israel et al, 2001, p. 56).

When community-based social capital is present, it is demonstrated by the level of interest and caring that adult members of the community have with regard to the welfare of another person's child and by the efforts of individuals and organizations to engage children in community programs and activities that make effective use of their time and energy (Beaulieu & Mulkey, 1995; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995). What is most significant about community social capital is that the adults' investments of time and resources are not intended to bring direct benefits to them. Such investments are designed to contribute to the educational progress among the young generation.

### **2.3 Problems regarding the concept of social capital and educational attainment**

As social capital gains a great interest among scholars in different disciplines, Lin points out that the "concept also faces increasing divergence in conceptualization and measurement" (Lin *et al*, 2001, p. 57). A review of the literature conducted for this dissertation found several studies where the term of social capital was used superficially and tautologically, adding little substance to the research presentation. Portes points out

that the current interests in the concept may be exaggerated for two reasons: first, “the set of processes encompassed by the concept are not new and have been studied under other label in the past” and second “there is little ground to believe that social capital will provide a ready remedy for major social problems” (Portes, 1998, p. 62).

The divergence in analyzing social capital at different levels has created some theoretical and practical confusion. For instance, Coleman suggests that social capital can exist in other forms: obligation and expectation; information potential, norms and effective sanctions, authority relations, appropriable social organization, and intentional organization (Coleman, 1990, pp. 306-313). This notion of the concept makes for the richness of Coleman’s writing. However, this also can be problematic, especially when researchers attempt to utilize the concept in their empirical studies. Social capital is interpreted to mean the relations, networks, and obligations existing in social relations and the product of those interactions. As a variable, social capital cannot be assessed directly, but instead requires translation into specific indicators.

As a matter of fact, the interpretation of the cause and effect of social capital creates confusion over the question of its measurement. Several studies in the current literature have investigated how access to social capital may affect high school graduation rates (Beaulieu & Israel, 1997; Coleman, 1988; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Licher, Cornwell & Eggebeen, 1993; Smith, Beaulieu & Seraphine, 1995). These studies vary widely in how social capital is measured. For example, Beaulieu & Israel (1997) used 17 variables which spanned a broad array of family and community characteristics, while Lichter, Cornwell & Eggebeen (1993) limited their definition of social capital solely



to measures of family structure. Due to discrepancies in measurement, research results show inconsistency.

With regard to family structure, several studies have found factors which seem to significantly affect high school graduation. According to Coleman (1988), we would expect a stable, two-parent family structure to be significantly related to high school graduation rates. However, the results are inconsistent in other studies. For rural students, Beaulies and Israel (1997) found that presence of parents in the household was not significantly related to graduation from high school. Instead they found that two-parent families were an important factor for those who lived in suburban and urban areas. In their sample of youth from Baltimore, Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) found that the presence of a father in the home was related to positive outcomes for youth in their bivariate statistical analyses. However, when they controlled for human capital and the status of the youth at first measurement, those relationships disappeared in some cases and reversed direction in others. Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) assert that the instability of their findings may be due to the small number of participants in their sample with intact family structures. Hagan, Mac Millan and Wheaton (1996) determined that family structure had no significant effect on high school completion, but it was significantly related to college graduation. In contrast, Lichter, Conwell, and Eggbeen (1993) concluded that rural youth living with only one parent were almost twice as likely to drop out of school than their counterparts living in two-parent families.

Inconsistent results may be a consequence of poor measurement. Wall *et al* suggest that researchers employing the concept need to distinguish carefully between indicators that reflect the level of social capital (1998, p. 316). As a variable, social



capital can not be assessed directly, but requires operationalizing into specific indicators. Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam have chosen some similar and some different ways to represent social capital for empirical analysis. All three theorists rely on assessing the membership in organizations and/or voluntary associations as useful measures for social capital. But, because all have a different unit of analysis for their specific interpretation, there is little similarity in the indicators they use for more detailed analysis. As a result, Wall *et al* reveal that indicators are so closely linked that it makes rigorous empirical analysis extremely difficult (1998, p, 315).

Since research on social capital and education has strongly emphasized quantitative methods, qualitative methods are not given as much significance. Approaches taking into account the quantitative aspect of the concept (for instance, how many people in the household or participation rate in organizations, the number of voluntary associations in a community) leave out qualitative aspects, such as the relationship among individuals. Wall *et al* voice that the qualitative elements are very important in building trust and obligations (Wall *et al*, 1998, p. 315). Therefore, it is crucial to include both methods in studies on social capital and educational attainment so that research findings can not only be valid but also enrich the interpretation after the researcher has engaged in field work and participant observation.

While much of the literature on social capital in education supports the claim that family- and community-based social capital leads to improved academic achievement, several studies show inconsistency and contradiction. McNeal (1999, p.118) indicates that empirical findings show inconsistency in parenting practices, academic achievement, and educational attainment. He argues that different studies provided inconsistent

explanations about the nature of the relationship between social capital (i.e. parental involvement), educational outcomes and students' academic achievement. On the one hand, much research supports the claim that parental involvement leads to improved academic achievement (e.g. Coleman 1988 and 1990; Beaulieu & Mulkey, 1995; Smith, Beaulieu, & Seraphine, 1995; Beaulieu, Hartless & Israel, 2001). However, other researchers indicate that parent involvement is associated with lower levels of achievement (e.g. Horn & West 1992) or does not affect achievement (e.g. Epstein 1991, Keith 1991 as cited by McNeal, 1999, p. 118). The inconsistent findings suggest that the variation in levels of parent involvement by race, ethnicity and social class, as well as the variation in how parent involvement affects achievement, may be an alternative explanation. McNeal suggests that the inconsistent findings may be related to one of three reasons. For instance, in McNeal's reasoning: firstly, parent involvement is not fully conceptualized in the forms of social capital and relations, including parent-child, parent-parent, and parent-school components. Secondly, parent involvement in terms of race and socioeconomic status is not fully assessed. Thirdly, parent involvement has little direct effect on achievement because achievement is "essentially a cognitive outcome and parent involvement pre-dominantly affects behavioral outcomes" (McNeal., 1999, p.123).

In the article *Parental involvement as Social Capital: Differential Effectiveness in Science Achievement, Truancy, and Dropping Out*, McNeal (1999, p. 119) argues that research on parent involvement needs to shift to examine how it affects student behaviors (such as truancy and dropping out). He points out that research on high school dropouts uses multiple theoretical paradigms, including social control models, rational choice paradigm, and various integration and process models. However, he voices concern that

there has been little research on how social capital or parent involvement affects student behaviors associated with truancy or dropping out of high school (p.119).

In summary, social capital in its various forms and contexts has emerged as one of the most salient concepts in the social sciences. The above section reviewed social capital as discussed in the literature, especially in its relationship to education. While there have been different views and different perspectives on this theory, a fundamental consensus is that social capital is attained from the embedded resources of a social network. In regard to educational attainment, as in the context of family, community social capital can be influenced by the presence and strength of structural and process elements within families and locality. Among the structural attributes are size of family, family background and population diversity. These structural elements provide opportunities for interaction at the family and local level. The process components of family and community-based social capital can be seen in the social norms, networks, and interactions between adult community members and children that support, enforce, or facilitate educational attainment.

#### **2.4 Research Studies on Social Capital and Educational Attainment in Developing Countries**

While Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam provide excellent insights, it is important to remember their geographic position. The literature that they and others have formulated on social capital has been written in developed, industrialized countries and describes educational conditions and realities as they exist in those parts of the world. It would be very mistaken to assume automatically that these conditions also prevail in developing countries. Obviously, other factors exist within the contexts of developing countries

which are in many ways very different from those in developed countries. Harber and Davies (1997) point out that “ the everyday context in which children grow up and educational institutions function in some developing countries differ markedly from those predominant in developed, industrialized countries” ( p.10).

I analyze the social capital concept at length and indicate that it is socially constructed. While social capital is intangible, it is developed from the rational-choice approach in developed countries (Bhattacharya, 2001, p.673). Rational choice approach is one of the foundations of neo-classical economy in which economists theorized about the concept as "rational utility maximizes". Self interest, contracts, legal systems and litigation are several features of the rational choice approach. The rational choice approach locates the motivation of human action within the self-interest seeking desire of the actor. However, in the developing world context, the rational- choice approach is still a contested agenda as many countries are still in transitional economies. Could we define social capital in developing countries based on the rational-choice approach? We cannot ignore the evidence that several developing countries, particularly Viet Nam are still seen as both a low-choice and poor countries. How can the rational choice approach be applied in the low- choice countries? Is there any way to view social capital rather than the rational approach? I argue that social capital, which is embedded in social relations and social structure, can be viewed from an integrative approach, which includes historical, cultural and communal dimensions and human values.

Over the three last decades, numerous studies have been done on education in developing countries. There is much literature on the effect of family factors, school factors, and parental support on student achievement. Although most writers have agreed

that school factors and parental interest and support play a positive role in shaping a child's achievement, there has been a lack of consensus on the role played by family factors in developing countries. Research conducted in Third World countries in the 1970s produced equivocal results; the common view of researchers was that SES and academic achievement were unrelated. Wealthy children did not perform better than impoverished ones. This finding was supported in studies cited by Heyneman (1980, 1979), which were conducted in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Papua New Guinea, and India. However, a review of more recent literature produced in Third World countries reflects a new orientation in the research since about 1980.

The literature indicates how different types of parental involvement affect children's academic performance. Most of these studies, in addition to the traditional SES variables, have introduced the notion of parental interest (Niles, 1981), parental expectations and involvement (Chen, 1988), parental attitudes and religion (Wagner, 1988), the mother-child relationship (Bacon, 1988), parental teaching style (Barber, 1988), involvement of influential relatives (Lanzas, 1988), and parental motivation and culture-related activities (Lockheed, 1988). The results of these studies, which included variables that Coleman (1987, 1988, and 1990) called social capital, were consistent with those studies in industrialized countries. Table 1 provides a review of research studies on family background and student achievement that were conducted in developing countries during 1980-90s.

In his study of Sri Lanka, Niles (1981) indicated that parental interest in the child's progress at school, measured by the frequency of and reasons for parents visits to



school, correlated moderately with student achievement. In studying the effects of parental literacy and attitudes on children's reading achievement in Morocco, Wagner (1988) found that parents with higher-achieving children tended to (a) take parental responsibility in their children's education, (b) hold modern views toward the ideal family structure (women's employment, later marriage, and fewer children), (c) are more involved in their children's school progress, and (d) believe in either traditional religious observance or little religious observance. In a study conducted in Peru, Barber (1988) found that parents of high-achieving children reported spending more time with their children, helping them more often to do school work, and reading to them more frequently than other parents.



**Table 1 Review of research on family background and student achievement in developing countries**

Author	Year	Country	Variables	Measure of Output	Direction of Effects	Sample
Heyneman	1972	Uganda	Family income, parents' education & occupation, teacher & school characteristics, student attitudes	Math, science & English	No relationship	Primary leaving exam
Bibby	1974	Ghana	Family possessions, parents' education	English, Arithmetic	Weakly correlated	Secondary Entrance Exam
Niles	1981	Sri Lanka	Family income, parents' education; school & teacher characteristics; parental interest & Aspiration	English, math, social studies (average)	Significant Relationship	High School Ordinary-level exam
Cooksey	1981	Cameroon	Social class, occupation & family size	Math & French	Significant Relationship	Secondary school entrance Exam
Chen	1988	USA & China	Cultural values & Parents' belief	Math	Significant Relationship	Primary student
Wagner	1988	Morocco	Parental literacy, attitude & Religion	Reading	Significant Relationship	6-7 years students
Barber	1988	Peru	Parents' wealth, education, & interest	Reading & Math	Significant Relationship	6-8 & 9-12 years
Bacon	1988	USA & Japan	Mother-child interaction	Math & reading	Math: Sig. Relationship Reading: not sig.	Kindergarten
Lockheed	1988	Thailand	Parents' wealth & encouragement	Math	Significant Relationship	8 <sup>th</sup> grade
Lockheed	1988	Malawi	Parents possessions & education	Math & Language	Language: Sig, Math?	4 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> graders
Cochrane	1982	Thailand	Land ownership, parents' education & aspiration	Reaching & writing	Significant Relationship	5-13 yrs. 14 & up

Source: Adapted from Schiefelbein & J. Simmon (1981): "The determinants of school achievements: A review of the research for developing countries." Ottawa, Canada.

Lockheed, Fuller, and Nyirongo (1988) found that parental motivation and culture-related home activities in Malawi were related to student achievement. Culture-related home activities such as feeding livestock, carrying fodder or water, preparing meals, and baby sitting were used as measure of SES in the Malawi context. The researchers found that having more work tasks after school and living in a thatched-roof structure were negatively associated with achievement. In his study on “Family Background and Student Achievement in Kenya,” Maudy (1988) found that socioeconomic factors such as parental education and occupation, reinforced by school factors such teaching and learning resources, were important in determining student achievement.

Studies conducted by western researchers focused mainly on school effectiveness in developing countries. These include studies by Avalos (1980), Fuller (1987), Fuller and Heyneman (1989), Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) and Walberg (1991). Harber and Davies comment that their research in developing countries showed that school quality had a much greater influence on academic achievement than family achievement and other factors in the home. Their studies were primarily based on student achievement as the key outcome measure, either across the curriculum or in specific subject areas such as science or math (Harber & Davies, 1997, p. 33). One of the key issues is the researchers’ stance with regard to “intake.” As Angus (1993) comments:

Family background, social class, any notion of context, are typically regarded as ‘noise’- as ‘outside’ background factors which must be controlled for and then stripped away so that the researcher can concentrate on the important domain of the school factors.  
(Angus, 1993, p. 328)

Such research, in my view, only considered pupils and teachers as “intake variables”. Harber and Davies explain that there is a stereotypical approach which appears to focus on the underachieving school for the poor quality of its intake. (Harber & Davies, 1997, p. 34).

Lockheed and Levin (1993, p. 2) voice their concern that schools in developing countries face many pressing problems, such as relatively low school participation (in terms of enrollment of eligible age groups), low levels of school completion, even at the primary level, and low level of achievement. While studies on social capital and educational attainment are few in developing countries, there are a couple of studies on its possible applications in economics and political science. For instance, the studies on poverty and social capital in Tanzania by Narayan (1997, 1999) and in India by Blomkvist (2001) have focused on the linkage between social capital and poverty in Tanzania and on building of civic communities in India.

Through their studies, Narayan and Prichett show that associational relationships and social norms in the villages of rural Tanzania are not only considered as capital but also as social assets. By using the Social Capital and Poverty Survey (SCPS) and data from different surveys, they indicate that a village’s social capital has an effect on the income of the households in the village (1999, p. 871). The basic survey instrument asked individuals a variety of questions about three dimensions of social capital; for instance, questions about their membership in various voluntary associations or groups; questions about the characteristics of those groups; and questions about individual’s values and attitudes. Based on their empirical analysis, they find that “one standard-deviation increase in the village social capital index ... is associated with at least 20%

higher expenditure per person in each household in the village.” They identify a number of types of evidence to support their claim that social capital affects individual income. Members of households in villages with more capital are more likely to enjoy better public services, use advanced agricultural practices, join in communal activities, and use credit for agricultural improvements. (Narayan & Prichett, 1999, p. 890).

While literature on social capital is scarce in developing countries, educational research in developing countries still faces challenges in methodological approaches. Miron points out both advantages and disadvantages that can be associated with qualitative and quantitative research methods. She explains that “researchers coming from the North face difficulties in languages, culture and socio-economic class, and they encounter trouble in conducting qualitative research, whereas differences in culture and socio-economic status are much more difficult to overcome” (Miron, 1998, pp. 391-392).

According to Miron, large scale quantitative research in the context of developing countries is burdened by unreliable national statistics. When carrying out any large-scale sampling it is much harder to obtain feedback because of insufficient mailing systems. In addition, there are a number of cultural and traditional differences between industrialized and developing countries which complicate the use of questionnaire-based studies in the countries of the South.

While researchers from developing countries are not burdened by language and cultural barriers, they have difficulties in securing sufficient resources for equipment and personnel for conducting large quantitative studies. As a matter of fact, researchers from developing countries predominantly employ qualitative research methods (Myron, 1998).

The emerging perspective which combines both research methods serves as a fruitful point of departure for the analysis of social capital and educational attainment in developing countries, particularly in Viet Nam. In addition, since social capital has gained a large interest among scholars, there have been serious questions raised about the concept's rigor and its utility in scientific theory. Lin and his associates argue that the scientific viability of the notion of social capital depends upon developing an approach which narrows down its theory and measurement. They indicate that "without a clear conceptualization, social capital may soon become a catch-all term broadly used in reference to anything that is social" (Lin, 2001, p. 57). It is crucial to present my conceptual framework on social capital and provide a clear measurement of the concept. The following section addresses my conceptualization of social capital in order to advance the theoretical work on educational attainment in Viet Nam.

## **2.5 My Conceptualization of Social Capital and Its Relationship with Education in Vietnamese Context**

As I mentioned above, most research on social capital and education has been conducted in developed countries. They have by necessity used individual- or group level structural and process measures as indicators of social capital. As the above review of literature shows, social capital has been used more as an umbrella concept and as a metaphor with a number of different applications. The literature on social capital is extraordinary extensive and diverse. Social scientists are often driven by large questions. But these questions get redefined and reframed in the specific contexts in which they are raised. As we understand how the theory of social capital is formulated in developed countries, a question is posed: can the concept of social capital help analyze something worthwhile about education development in Viet Nam, particularly on educational



attainment? Is the concept of social capital applicable in the current educational context of Viet Nam? What model of family- and community-based social capital can enhance one's understanding of educational attainment in rural Viet Nam? How do I map the level of interaction between family members and community members and the nature of the engagement in Vietnamese villages? Will it help me throw some new light on the ongoing educational reform in Viet Nam? In other words, I am interested in finding out whether the concept of social capital can enable us to raise new questions on Vietnamese education during the *doi moi* process.

I attempt to examine whether social capital and its relationships with education can be applicable in Viet Nam in order to understand how the structure and process of social relationships are interrelated to constitute social capital in this context. In my view, we need to build a comprehensive theory of educational attainment in developing countries by drawing from this somewhat eclectic combination of existing social capital theories and recent approaches while adding various dimensions that are relevant to Third World contexts.

Many countries in Asia have developed a strong sense of basic trust, especially with respect to family and clan ties (Pye, 2001, p.383). Pye asserts that "many countries in Asia with pronounced norms of civility and respectable levels of social capital ... particularly in the case of the Confucian culture where much that is assumed to be associated with social capital - such as etiquette, a work ethic, a high valuation of education, and strong rules for mutual bonding, and strong rules for mutual bonding - is in evidence." (p. 388). However, such claims are most applicable when such societies were predominately agricultural societies. Now, given that many Asian countries have

become more modernized and industrialized, the question is whether the traditional cultural patterns can be maintained to build a civic society.

Explicitly, my point of view on social capital in Viet Nam is not taken from a rational choice approach, but from a contextual approach which addresses inherent social relationships within the social structure in Viet Nam based on Vietnamese culture and identity. Social capital, as I understand, is fundamentally about “connectedness” and “engagement”. Obviously, it is not necessarily about all kinds of social engagement in society. Basically, “connectedness” means networking and “engagement” means participation. Both connectedness and engagement contribute to building trust among people and promote collective action. For me, I have never conceived of a social capital definition simply as a descriptive idea. In this sense, I am defining social capital as a collective resource arising from sustained social interaction within a group or collective actors. Their durable social relations are conditioned for the actions of group participants in relation to individual and collective goals. It is made possible by commitments on the part of individuals to the group and trust among group members over a period of time. As Lin, indicates the value of the concept is to offer new explanations concerning collective action, institutional efficacy, and improvement of the quality of a civic society (Lin, 2001)

In the chapter three, I will identify how elements of connectedness and engagement in the traditional Vietnamese society and how they have been changed during the *doi moi* process. My investigation of social capital focuses on relevant components or aspects of social organizations within the Vietnamese context: networks, norms, trust, and culture within its contextual boundaries. I will focus on several themes,

such as nationalism, community, family and individuals in Viet Nam to lay the underlying structure of the Vietnamese general social context.

As mentioned above, Coleman (1988) identified three forms of social capital: (1) obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures, (2) information channels, and (3) norms and effective sanctions. Putnam also identified three components of social life that made up social capital: network, norms, and trust. My discussion and use of network, norms, and trust draws from it and is consistent with both Coleman and Putnam's discussions. Beyond that, I incorporate cultural and contextual elements from Viet Nam's *doi moi* process to bring up my analysis in a comprehensive scope.

As I conceive it, social capital, together with other forms of capital, is an input into the process of development. In particular, social capital has a close link with human capital. But, a key difference between social capital and human capital is that social capital is fundamentally a property of collectiveness, whereas human capital is embodied primarily in individuals. For instance, education can be embodied in one individual, but social capital can be acquired by a group of people and requires a form of cooperation among them. In a broader sense, education is worth pursuing for its own sake, and a well-educated population is important to successful social development. Education is considered to be a powerful element that helps to determine whether local people are able to participate in society, in their local communities, whether they can interact effectively with government and contribute to their well-being. Education plays an important role to engage people in community's activities and its pedagogy is a process of learning about mutuality through interaction and cooperation.

It is also a problematic when I apply a theory from the original U.S. context to a very different context in Viet Nam. As a matter of fact, it is very important to be able to adapt and modify concepts while maintaining the basic idea. While there are certain strands within the current literature that provide good examples to validate findings, several questions are posed. For instance, what measures are appropriate for Vietnamese society in terms of social capital and educational attainment? Can any measure based on family-based and community social capital bear any statistical relationship with indicators of educational performance? As a matter of fact, in constructing a measure of educational performance for children in the field research sites, I will employ key measures of interaction between children and adults in their households as well as their community from the Vietnamese rural context.

Vietnamese society is best characterized by a transitional society between a mono- agricultural economy toward multiple market oriented economy. The education sector has been restructured during the last decade. Many questions have arisen, for instance, whether citizen level of education is a good predictor of the establishment of social capital and human development, whether family mobility in rural areas is a good indicator for students' educational attainment, whether child labor is detrimental to students' performance in school, etc. The measurement of different variables will be described in more detail in the Chapter Four.

### **Summary**

The research reported in this dissertation synthesizes the theory of social capital and its relationship with educational attainment. Social capital as an evolving concept in social science has a number of properties that are related to education. In particular,

Coleman and other interested scholars have used it to measure what have been described as characteristics of family-, community-based social capital. By introducing the concept of social capital to the Vietnamese context during its *doi moi* process, I wish to expand the educational research on social capital theory in developing countries. By drawing from existing perspectives and adding dimensions relevant to developing countries, we can build a comprehensive and comparative theoretical framework on educational attainment. Central to this model is family- and community-based social relationships and their relation to educational attainment among children.



### CHAPTER 3

#### VIET NAM – GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

“Virtuous and talented men are key factors for national development” (1442)  
“Knowledge is the greatest asset of a nation” (1466)

Memoir on the steles of Doctors at the Literature Temple  
constructed in 1074 in Hanoi.

In this chapter, I first want to focus on the historical and cultural layers of Viet Nam as the primary context through which to explore the interrelationships between nationality, community, family and education in traditional society. Based on this general historical and cultural context, I want to secondarily present the rationale of the *doi moi* process in Viet Nam and its current educational system. This chapter explores the structural features of Vietnamese society that directly influence family-level educational demands – namely, the *doi moi* process and the current educational system. It includes a discussion of how social relationships within family and community levels may work to produce differences in educational attainment. Finally, using descriptive data from current data sources, the chapter will conclude with a preliminary examination of patterns behind educational indicators in Viet Nam in recent years.

Because the term “capital” is problematic, I have met some difficulties in trying to clarify the term both in the Vietnamese language and its underlying structure. In Vietnamese, capital is *von*. Capital or *von* usually refers to cash, or more specifically, to investment in tangible, durable, and alienable objects, such as buildings and machines whose accumulation can be estimated and whose worth can be assessed. Ostrom states that “all forms of human-made capital are created by spending time and effort in transformation and transaction activities in order to build tools or assets today that

increase income in the future" (Ostrom, 2000, p.174). Ostrom further writes that "money is not capital, but rather the means by which some forms of physical, human, and social capital may be obtained... Many types of capital can be created without money, or with very little of it, based on the time and energy spent by individuals in building tools and facilities, learning skills, and establishing regularized patterns of relationships with others" (p.174).

A classic saying in Vietnamese "money cannot buy everything," is still valid in Viet Nam today. Several Vietnamese researchers may argue with my claim that Viet Nam is lacking capital in many fields. How can you define social capital in one of the poorest countries of the world? My argument lies in the fact that social capital already exists in Viet Nam where social roles and networks or certain kinds of values and norms are rooted in its history, identity, culture and institutions. The following analysis provides my understanding of the social structure in traditional Viet Nam.

### **3.1 The Historical and Cultural Background**

Located on the eastern part of the Indochinese peninsula of the East Sea, Viet Nam shares its border with China to the north, Laos and Cambodia to the west, and covers an area of 331,000 square kilometers. Viet Nam is a multi-ethnic country with 54 ethnic groups. The present population of Viet Nam is about 78 million with the *Kinh* ethnic people accounting for 87% of the country's population (they mainly inhabit the Red River delta, the central coastal delta, the Mekong delta and major cities). The other 53 ethnic minority groups, totaling over 10 million people, are scattered over mountain areas (covering two-thirds of the country's territory) spreading from the North to the South. Among ethnic minorities, the most populous are the *Tay*, *Thai*, *Muong*, *Hoa*,

*Khmer, Nung, ...* with populations of around 1 million each, while the least populous are the *Brau, Roman, and Odu* with several hundred people each. The official language of the country is Vietnamese. While Buddhism is the main religion, there is also a significant number of Catholics, Confucianists and Taoists. In the South, there exist two other religions named Cao Dai and Hoa Hao.

Viet Nam's history over the last millennia is rich and remarkable in its dimensions. Many cultural motifs have become apparent over these millennia. First is a belief in the valuable and important role of a centralized state bureaucracy in national life, i.e. a pride of nationalism for national independence. Second is a mass historical experience and commitment to collective organizations in local villages that covered a wide range of functions-- emotional, spiritual, economic and cultural. Third, family ties have been a unit of strength for a cohesive society. Each member of the family is bound by loyalty to the family. Fourth, education in the traditional society of Viet Nam was based on actual life experiences, moral values and skills necessary for life. Table 2 summarizes the core values in traditional Vietnamese society.

**Table 2. Core Values in Vietnamese Traditional Society**

Dimensions of Vietnamese traditional society	Core values	
1) Pride of nationalism  2) Collective organizations and village culture  3) Family ties and Individuals	<i>Reason (Ly)</i>	Rationalized and legitimized the hierarchical order of society and of nation making hierarchy itself part of the intrinsic structure of the universe, a state of affair that was both natural and unalterable
	<i>The righteous path (Nghia)</i>	Types of behaviors in social roles, vertical and horizontal relationships
	<i>Spontaneity and Feeling (Tinh and Nhan)</i>	Feelings, sometime spontaneous, subjective, intuitive, desire and emotional.
	<i>Filial piety (hieu)</i>	Obedience, loyalty and respect
	<i>moral debt (on)</i>	Moral debt to parents and kinship
	<i>Respect (le)</i>	To authority, elderly and teachers

Source: adapted from Jamieson, 1993, *Understanding Viet Nam*

### 3.1.1 Nationalism

Viet Nam's history shows that Viet Nam has struggled for more than a thousand years with revolution and change that few other countries have experienced over such a long period of time. Viet Nam today is the product of decades of armed struggle both against foreign forces and among the Vietnamese themselves. Historians of Viet Nam focus on two elements that contributed to early Vietnamese social organization: the struggle against nature and the struggle against a mighty neighbor to the north (Lich su Viet Nam, 1971). SarDesai (1998, p. 12) writes that "the Vietnamese developed into one of the most determined, persistent, and tenacious people anywhere." The Vietnamese,

therefore, have long experience of the spirit of the nation-state. Whether they were imperial officials or peasants in their collective communes, the Vietnamese people were well accustomed to living with ideas of nationhood. The spirit of nationhood was spread and extended through generation by generation from the early days of Viet Nam's establishment. Nationalism can be seen even in Viet Nam's unique early history. Historians recorded two great heroines -- the Trung sisters -- military generals who drove the Chinese invaders from Viet Nam in 40 B.C. All Vietnamese people are very proud of the two heroines, even going so far as to deify them. Many pagodas were built to honor the sisters, the most notable being the Hai Ba pagoda in Ha noi and the Me Linh temple in Vinh Phuc province. In fact, my field research was conducted in Me Linh, where the two Trung sisters were born and led the uprising against the Chinese aggressors.

For centuries, legends were woven in people's memories that continued to inspire Vietnamese resistance to foreign domination. Despite the first millennium of Chinese domination, the Vietnamese, as history relates, have never lost their ideas of nationhood. Viet Nam regained its independence after one thousand years of Chinese domination. Buttinger shares his views in his book *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Viet Nam* (1970, p. 36), stating that "the main features of Vietnamese history, from its pre-Chinese past to the present day, reveal itself to be its unity and continuity for over two thousand years." The unity and continuity of its struggle for independence have been proven through different struggles in its history. The strength and durability of the Vietnamese people lies in their vision and their love of their country. For Vietnamese people, whether in the ancient times or modern times, and whether they live in Viet Nam or overseas, Viet Nam is their homeland, their close community, their villages and their



people. Nationalism, to most Vietnamese, is in a concrete simple term reflected through their mother's lyric songs, kinship, religion, bamboo bunches, palm trees, kites flying on rice fields and water buffaloes. Their intimacy networks and relationships maintained through centuries help create cohesion in the society.

Features of the social life networks, norms and trust for the Vietnamese in history and in present times, first and foremost, are a unity for Vietnamese nationhood. This unity, I believe, was the internal powerful source of solidarity of Vietnamese people. Therefore, the social structure in Viet Nam existed through their struggles against alien domination. Vietnamese people were always united together and this unification through centuries became institutionalized in features of social organizations.

In regard to the question of how nationalism in Viet Nam was shaped in early times and maintained through centuries until today, one of the explanations may be seen that the national spirit was originated in nature from social network and particularly in the social structure in community and kinship life in Viet Nam. In fact, the social network was woven into Vietnamese villages and people's community. The norms and trust which people created were originally developed in village life or in village dynamics. The next section is an analysis of these village-level dynamics.

### **3.1.2 Community**

To help understand the depth of social networks in Viet Nam, I discuss Vietnamese community and social networks that serve as the foundations for a certain level of social cohesion. First, I provide some important background information on community and second, show how the social network correlates with the community and its people.

Viet Nam is characterized by wet rice cultivation in the deltas, coastal lowlands and coastal uplands. The very unusual S- shape of Viet Nam has always commanded attention. The two large deltas in the North and the South along with the narrow coastal lands in the central region create Viet Nam's many geographical particularities. In his study about Viet Nam's history *The small dragon: A Political History of Viet Nam*, Buttinger (1972) states "among the conditions of human existence set by nature along the east coast of Indochina, the climate is by far the most important" (p. 46). Buttinger also notes that "it would be hard to say whether the people of the Red River delta in the north have suffered more from the armies of invasion that have descended on them from the north or from the furious waters of the Red River in the many seasons of excessive rainfall, often followed by an equally murderous period of drought." (Buttinger, 1972, p. 48).

The culture of rice entails a definite rhythm of economic activity. Phan (1998) argues that in the past, while a household in China could plow and plant rice by itself, a Vietnamese farmer couldn't. The main reason is that Vietnamese planted water-rice, not wheat or dry rice. Water rice needs to have an irrigation channel. The Red River, considered as the cradle of the Vietnamese people, was governed by alternation between a dry and rainy period every year. But the irregularity of precipitation has forever been one of the main causes of human distress in the valleys and deltas inhabited by the Vietnamese. The high and low levels of its rivers threatened people with two things: floods and drought, both inevitably leading to famine. Le documented that some of the hydraulic works in the Red River valley must have been started long before the formation of an independent Vietnamese state, perhaps even before the arrival of the Chinese (Le,

1981). Since one household cannot have its own irrigation system, then, Vietnamese peasants worked together to build dikes and dams to irrigate their rice fields. No single Vietnamese family, whatever its size and the working ability of its members, was ever in a position to cope with these tasks. Economic survival required cooperation on a wider basis and of a higher order. This basis was the notable cooperation of the village, the province and the state. In fact, this cooperation to build a system of dikes and dams created the essential glue and cohesion for Vietnamese society in the past as well as the present.

The system of dikes and dams surrounding rice fields in countryside areas has been the most visible sign of the working efforts created by Vietnamese peasants. The Red River flows through the delta between two gigantic dykes. The irrigation system in many areas of Viet Nam was also considered the biggest architectural work in Viet Nam. It is true for tourists around the world who visit Viet Nam that they will not find such ancient and large architectural buildings like Egypt's pyramids, the Great Walls in China, or the royal palaces in India. Instead, they can see hundreds of miles of dikes, dams, and channels in low land areas and stepped rice fields in upper highlands.

Building such irrigated systems required huge efforts by people from the past in Viet Nam. Building together, this system created a social network among people in order to fight against floods, droughts, and other natural catastrophes. In fact, the need for a complex system of dams, canals, and other hydraulic provisions thus led to the early formation of social organizations and local administrative bodies to undertake the works. Buttinger is right to claim that it is also the “main reason for the stability of Vietnamese social institutions in the midst of events tending to destroy their substance together with

their form" (Buttinger, 1972, p. 42). The conditions for economic survival for Vietnamese people have always been reflected in the Vietnamese civic code and philosophy of state, especially in Le' and Nguyen's dynasties as well as the current government of Viet Nam.

Tran (2001, p. 5) indicates that "most Vietnamese were home bound and spent their lives between their birth-place and their ancestors' tombs and the society was often reduced to their own village." The term *lang nuoc* which properly meant "village-nation" was often used to refer to their own village and vested with the sense of community. The rural commune (called *lang xa* in Vietnamese) consisted of all the rural population. Almost all peasants belonged to a commune, which usually contained the center of their emotional and sentimental lives -- their "home village" (*que huong*). Whether in better-off and in worse-off areas (where the weather was difficult to predict), collective organization played a vital role in providing support to peasants, helping to insure against poverty. The frequent flooding of the Red River as well as disastrous droughts brought misery to the people of the Red River Delta. In a dry year, water may drop by five-sixths; in a year of heavy monsoons, the floods may raise the water level to forty times the normal height of the river. According to some scholars, the collective work in the building of dams and the regulatory, compartmentalized field system are powerful evidence that Vietnamese worked together to provide protection against flooding. This mechanism created a powerful connection among local Vietnamese people.

For most of Vietnamese people, the commune and the home village provided the basic social frame for the rural population. Through the literature and practices of today, I found that the commune had an important religious function as well. Each commune had

built a communal house (called *dinh lang*) for its worship rituals called *thanh hoang*. With its tutelary spirit, *thanh hoang*, was the focus of local religious activity, communal feasts, and so on. *Thanh hoang* or the communal spirit had usually received imperial recognition and approval, and the representative spirit were people who dedicated their lives for the communes and for the state. Villagers formed voluntary associations to meet their various needs. Luong (1992, p. 58) documents that most notable associations were two widely known associations, namely the exclusive male literary association (*hoi van than*) and the elderly women's Buddhist association (*hoi chua ba*). The former included both Confucian teachers and, as a reflection of the colonial transformation, the holders of the Franco-Vietnamese certificate '*Etude e'tudes elementariness* (for the successful completion of the third grade examination). It organized the annual worship of Confucius at the literary shrine (*van chi*). Luong also notes that in the colonial period, the literati association was still assigned the honored task of delivering formal speeches at the communal deity worship ritual at the communal house (Luong, 1992, p.58).

In contrast, the elderly women's Buddhist association met at the village pagoda for the worship of Buddha on the first day and fifteenth day of each lunar month. This worship became a social custom for a majority of families and is still practiced widely in society today. There were also other voluntary associations, as Luong (p. 58) reported, that included the female-controlled rotating credit associations (*ho*) and the household-centered ceremony assistance associations. Members of these associations came mainly from within a hamlet. The ceremony assistance associations were formed for mutual assistance among members on the occasions of weddings, examination success, ritual honoring the elderly, and funerals within members' households. They were called *ho*



*tien, ho gao, ho co*, depending on whether the assistance took the form of cash, rice, or labor contributions at the time of a ceremony. Luong documents that “most village households participated in at least one of these mutual assistance associations” (Luong, 1992, p.59). These practices are still alive today in Vietnamese communities.

Local religion, therefore, linked the collective and the state. The commune was responsible for providing the military and labor resources that were essential for the survival of the nation. It is widely reported that different dynasties in Viet Nam allowed a form of self-governance at the communal level. The lowest level of the imperial government stopped at the district level. A well-known maxim says, “The writ of the king bows to the customs of the village” (*phep vua thua le lang*) reflecting the power of the local commune in Viet Nam. It means the local autonomy had its own rules and governed locally to maintain the local power within its boundary.

What Phan (1998, p. 112) terms a “village mechanism” is a number of institutions contributing to the power of the village as a whole. One example of a village mechanism in an agricultural society like Viet Nam is the so-called communal land (*ruong cong* or *cong dien*; also *cong tho*). The commune allocated this land to its members in order to meet communal needs, and also helped those who lacked land. It averaged over one-fourth of the land area and was often highly valued by the peasants as a support to the collective and an insurance against risk. Through Vietnamese historical experience, collective property and its use as a basis for the local community created a social network among local people. The commune's important collective functions helped create also horizontal social relations for peasants. It was a powerful evidence of social formation in Viet Nam. Fforde & de Vylder (1996, p. 50) writes that the “Vietnamese peasants’

emotional attachment to their home village is legendary." Nguyen offers a candid statement about Vietnamese peasants:

The great water network, as well as the struggle for national independence, necessitated frequent mobilizations of the entire peasantry. Hundreds of thousands of people would assemble to work on the dikes. Because the Vietnamese monarchy could line up only a small number of regular troops to fight huge Chinese feudal armies, the entire people had to be mobilized to defend the nation. The peasants, having conquered nature as well as invaders, would not be satisfied to return home and resume life under the conditions of slavery that had been imposed on them. The peasants' struggle for their rights weaves in and out of the Vietnamese history like a piece of red thread. Unless we can grasp this concept of peasant struggle we cannot understand Vietnamese history.

(Nguyen, 1974, p. 20)

No doubt village life in rural Viet Nam is tightly knit, well networked, and has a long history dating from the early times. Luong in his book *Revolution in the Village* (1992) vividly analyses collectivism and village networks in Viet Nam. He writes "Within the bamboo hedge of the rural community, members related to one another within the framework of cooperative peasant village." (Luong, 1992, p.55). Although peasants were different in wealth and income, they were linked together by extensive social ties within the communal framework. I believe the central ecological conditions shaping traditional Vietnamese societies were high population density and the struggles against natural calamities.

### **3.1.3 Cultural identity in Viet Nam**

Culture can be an effective unifier, especially in terms of cultural identity, cultural autonomy, and social unity. Vietnamese cultural identity provided plenty of evidence of mutual trust in different layers of Vietnamese society. There is evidence of a love of learning, respect of authority and elders, national and communal interests put before self-interest, and a stability of a cohesive family members. A majority of Vietnamese citizens

attach their life and work to communal village mechanisms; indeed, they do not establish habits and minds of civic society as defined in Western terms. Vietnamese communities have reached a certain level of both generalized and particular trust among their members. Shared lands and working together against typhoons and droughts created a mutual trust for common action in each village.

Culturally, Vietnamese people have been influenced by the “Three Teachings”, i.e. Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Imported from China, Confucianism, to a greater degree than Buddhism or Taoism, was disseminated and ingrained into Vietnamese life for centuries. Nguyen was right to state that there were debates on the pros and cons of Confucianism in Viet Nam (Nguyen, 1974, p. 22). For the Vietnamese, however, Confucianism, as several current scholars indicate (Nguyen, 1974; Woodside, 1971; Marr, 1971; Phan, 1998 and Fforde, 1996), represent much more than a doctrine inscribed in texts; it is a legacy of history, a legacy to be understood, sometimes fought against and sometimes kept. Confucianism was the official ideology and was characterized by an age and gender hierarchy. Most Vietnamese kings and feudal lords continued to practice Confucian ideology even after they expelled the Chinese.

While the state adopted Confucianism as their ideology, village life was lively and cohesive (Nguyen, 1974, p. 23). In fact, Vietnamese traditional culture was rooted in popular and indigenous knowledge and Confucian ethics. These cultural combinations pervaded all aspects of Vietnamese life. Jamieson in his work *Understanding Viet Nam* analyzes the concepts of *yin* and *yang* in Viet Nam in its traditional times. He identifies a *yang* subsystem that was Neo-Confucian and it was considered as the traditional cultural system. A *yin* subsystem included a belief and practices in Buddhism and local village

institutions (Jamieson, 1993, p.15). Jamieson argues, "the Neo-Confucian *yang*<sup>3</sup> and the Buddhist, Taoist, and animist *yin* elements co-evolved to constitute a single system best thought of as Vietnamese folk religion," (1993, p.15). With this framework, Jamieson describes that Vietnamese culture and social organization developed a set of core values in response to history and circumstances. The core values include the terms *Reason (Ly)*, *The righteous path (Nghia)*, and *Spontaneity and Feeling (Tinh and Nhan)*.

While *Ly* and *Nghia* were considered the primary value-laden concepts and focused on roles rather than on people, *Tinh* and *Nhan* entailed empathy and compassion. The set of core values of *Ly*, *Nghia*, *Tinh* and *Nhan* established a proper balance in people's lives. These values reflected duties and feelings and reconstructed diverse opinions. Institutions and people's beliefs in *Ly*, *Nghia*, *Tinh* and *Nhan* inevitably resurfaced through many different historical periods. These values were powerful sources of family teachings, primary education, folktales, proverbs and popular literature.

### **3.1.4 The Family and the Individual**

Although the collective sense is strong, Vietnamese society is also traditionally characterized by family ties. With the first Chinese conquest and the Chinese Confucian family system model, the Vietnamese family was transformed along patriarchal and patrilineal lines. Vietnamese families include what Westerners usually call "nuclear" and extended families. Vietnamese families are generally both well-integrated units and hierarchically structured. This means that full authority and ownership of all property

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<sup>3</sup> "Yang is defined by a tendency toward male dominance, high redundancy, low entropy, complex and rigid hierarchy, competition and strict orthodoxy focused on rules for behavior based on social roles." "Yin is defined by a tendency toward greater egalitarianism and flexibility, more female participation, mechanism to dampen competition and conflict, high entropy, low redundancy, and more emphasis on feelings, empathy, and spontaneity." (source: Jamieson, 1993, pp. 12-13)

rested with the parents. Filial piety (*hieu* in Vietnamese), in which children were taught to obey, respect and honor their parents, was considered the most important element in each family. Children were taught how to return moral debt to parents and ancestors. *Hieu* and *on* became the cardinal virtues of traditional society because the parent-child relationship was at the very core of Vietnamese culture. Children were supposed to try to please their parents in many ways, fulfilling their aspirations and helping wherever possible.

I experienced such filial piety (*hieu*) and moral debt (*on*) in my own family. As the eldest daughter in the household, I had been filled with exemplars of children who knew *hieu*. In addition, I had been educated in four words: appearance, work, speech and morals. I had been nurtured to develop important qualities for girls and women such as gentleness and delicacy. As I grew up and became aware Western styles, I realized that children growing up in traditional Vietnamese families learned dependence and nurturance rather than independence.

By borrowing Confucian ethics, Vietnamese families under feudalism came to be based upon a type of male domination with strongly marked gender roles and divisions of labor. Scholarly works have also documented how Vietnamese families underwrote their survival by ancestor worship, filial piety, the ban on the intermarriage of matrilineal relatives, and by marriages. Like other societies, women played a crucial role in maintaining familial lines. Women did all the household labor and a great deal of agrarian and manual activities. In Vietnamese folklore, female Buddha's and proverbs bolstered images of women's courage and entrepreneurial skill. A saying that is still prevalent in the thinking of Vietnamese people, however, is "man is noble, woman is



base". With this view, Vietnamese women held less power than men and were expected to be totally obedient to their husbands and his parents.

To most Vietnamese people, family is the best source of strength and identity. Familial relationships in Viet Nam are defined by the term "relational embeddedness," which refers to the kind of personal relationships people have developed with each other through a history of interactions (Granovetter, 1992). In Western terms, this concept focuses on the particular relations people have, such as respect and friendship, that influence their behavior. It is through these ongoing personal relationships that people fulfill such social motives as sociability, approval, and prestige. In Vietnamese thinking, family relationships or kinship ties are defined accordingly to filial piety ethics (*hieu*), moral debt (*on*), and to respect to the status of seniors (*le*). In everyday life throughout history, these behaviors were sustained and still prevail today in Viet Nam life. *Hieu*, *on*, and *le* still remain the most powerful elements in Vietnamese life. Today, every home still has an ancestral altar. Death anniversaries and *Tet* (Lunar New Year) celebrations still bring many families together, and these gatherings were still prized as a primary source of identity by many Vietnamese. It is very significant for every Vietnamese to participate in the rituals of family life.

### **3.1.5 Education in pre-modern times**

Long before the coming of Western education there were traditional Vietnamese and Confucian education systems in Viet Nam. Pre-modern education in Viet Nam was characterized by the state and official orthodoxy. To some extent, Vietnamese education during pre-modern times was very elitist. Trying to become a mandarin had been for

centuries the highest dream one could have, while the very best one could hope for was to marry a scholar with goal of one day acceding to the level of mandarin.

As documented in the literature on traditional Vietnamese society, the most honored profession was that of schoolteacher. For example, we have beautiful proverbs such as “Without a teacher, one could hardly make a successful life,” (*khong thay do may lam nen*) and “Love the master if you wish your children to become literate.” Before the period of French rule, traditional education was mainly the product of many centuries of Chinese influence over Viet Nam. In every village there was always a rich family or clan which hired a teacher for their children. It was common in every village of Viet Nam that the temple of ancestors served as the schoolroom.

Clan children (mainly boy children) learned how to read, write and recite classical Chinese texts by heart, and the most advanced learned how to write poems and essays on themes of Confucian doctrine in preparation for the examinations. The state played no role in financing or appointing teachers. This was entirely left to each village. Mandarins responsible for education controlled only the number and academic level of students who applied to take the competitive exams. It was well documented that studying was highly esteemed, for there were schools everywhere. Every family, no matter how poor, did everything it could to send its children (at least the boy) to school, even if only to learn “a few letters.” When a child showed learning capabilities, his family would make great sacrifices to enable him to continue his studies. If children showed good learning results, their families sent them to district and provincial level government schools. At these levels, candidates were prepared for the series of competitive examinations to complete their formal education. These examinations were administered every three years and

were conducted at both the provincial level and at the national level for outstanding scholars. If they passed such competitive examinations, they were entered into the ranks of the mandarin.

For many centuries until the beginning of the twentieth century, the learning materials were mainly based on the set of four Confucian classics and the Confucian five classic Books of Confucianism. Materials emphasized the cultivation of high moral character and the study of wisdom to be found in the Confucian classics. The Vietnamese indigenous education and Confucian education conserved and transmitted knowledge and wisdom from one generation to another. The tradition of love and respect for learning is inscribed in the Temple of Literature's stele: "Virtuous and talented people make the nation's vital force" (1412) and "Knowledge is the greatest asset of a nation" (1466) (Memoir on the stele of Doctors at the Literature Temple constructed in 1074 in Hanoi). However, education was limited to the rote learning of classical teachings.

Western education was introduced to Viet Nam in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century by Christian missionaries. At the beginning of French domination there were a mixture of schools, such as French schools, Franco-Vietnamese Schools and Confucian-feudal schools. After 1919, there were no more Confucian-feudal schools, but the Franco-Vietnamese curricula came into effect in all schools. In the over 80 years of French domination, the education system was very limited. Pham (1995, p. 48) documents that up to 1941-1942, there were only 3 senior secondary schools, 65 lower secondary schools and 737 primary schools. Only 2.6 percent of the population was enrolled in schools, while more than 90 percent of population was illiterate.

### **3.1.6 Educational Expansion after Independence in 1945**

When Viet Nam gained independence in 1945, the new government quickly set out to expand educational opportunities for all Vietnamese. The denial of academic education to Viet Nam during the French colonial period had ignited a demand for schooling among Vietnamese that was not to die down quickly. Moreover, the new government faced a great and immediate need for trained leaders and skilled workers to build the country. President Ho Chi Minh considered illiteracy as one of the three most dangerous enemies along with starvation and foreign invasion. In the government's first session, one day after the declaration of national independence, President Ho Chi Minh defined the policy of combating ignorance as second only to the policy of combating famine. His reason was that "An ignorant nation is a weak nation." He launched a literacy campaign and called upon the entire population to participate in the movement. The campaign was launched under the patriotic slogans: "To attend Popular Education classes is to love the country!" and "To combat illiteracy is to combat foreign invasion!"

Although Viet Nam faced untold hardship during two subsequent resistance wars from 1946 to 1975, the government in Viet Nam has institutionalized the significant role of both formal and non-formal education. The educational system took shape and developed with divisions, such as literacy, basic education, general and vocational education and higher education. Over the past half century, both in years of war and peace, the Vietnamese state and people have developed education through three reforms in 1950, 1956, and 1981 (Tran & Nguyen, 2000, p. 219).

Until 1975, the North and the South had different educational system. While the South had had twelve years of general education since before World War II, there were

two educational systems in the North. The first one was the twelve-year system in those areas under French colonization, the second one was just the nine-year system in areas outside of colonial control after the French left in 1954. The Vietnamese Government, however, had introduced ten years of general education in all parts of the North. This model continued after national reunification in 1975. The educational reform was launched in 1979 in order to unify the previous two systems: the ten-year system in the North and the twelve-system in the South whose length was maintained. In the 1992-1993 school year, the reform and unification of Viet Nam's school educational system was completed (Pham, 1995, p.52).

### **Summary**

The historical and cultural perspectives within the context of Viet Nam are important in order to gain a clear understanding of social relations in Vietnamese society. Clearly, social relationships in Viet Nam have proven powerful for social foundations. Cultural values and learning mobility contributed significantly to the establishment of Vietnamese social structures from traditional to modern times. The above discussion underscores the ways in which nation-state, community, family and individuals largely determined the structure of educational opportunities in traditional Vietnamese society. In the next section I address the *doi moi* process and the contemporary education system in Viet Nam.

### **3.2 *Doi moi* process during the 1990s**

Free from nearly one hundred years of French colonialism and 30 subsequent years of resistance wars, Viet Nam has struggled to position itself in the international arena. The Vietnamese government has long perceived development as the main goal



after the reunification of the country in 1975. Viet Nam's development path has been unusual in many ways. Given the post-war context in Viet Nam, where development was to begin almost from scratch after many years of isolation, many critical issues emerged. The most critical questions were how to overcome the poverty and further develop the country so that the Vietnamese people would not be left far behind the many other developing countries in the world, especially the neighboring countries in Southeast Asia and East Asia. Moreover, Viet Nam was at the bottom, in terms of GDP and GNP, in comparison with other countries in East Asia, while a number of New Industrialized Countries, like Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, have achieved successful economic results and integrated vigorously in the global system. China had been on the rise since the beginning of 1980s and transformed its whole society at an unprecedented pace despite many years of centralized government. Falling in deep crises during the early 1980s, Viet Nam tried to redefine its whole system of relations, both internally and externally.

Drawing lessons from China in its Four Modernizations (science and technology, agriculture, defense, and industry) during the late 1970s and lessons from neighbor countries in the region, Viet Nam has embarked vigorously on a series of economic policy reforms known as the *doi moi* policy (or, economic renovation) since 1986. This policy was defined after reaching three important conclusions:

- The centrally planned economy did not work towards realizing the following socialist Ideals: prosperity, equality, freedom, and humanity.
  - Economic reform must be taken to transform a planned, centralized, and subsidized economy into a market economy managed by the State.
  - The social life of the people must be democratized.
- (The 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam and Article 15 of the 1992 Constitution of Socialist Republic Viet Nam)

At its simplest, *doi moi* involves a transition from a centrally-planned to a market-based, “multi-sectoral” economy, in which household enterprises, private business, foreign firms, and joint ventures are allowed to operate as autonomous entities alongside state-owned enterprises and cooperatives (UNDP, 1998, p. 1). In fact, *doi moi* has brought certain liberalization to Viet Nam. Parallel with this turning point, the implementation of an open-door policy has taken place in order to gradually integrate Vietnam into regional and global communities. There is an unprecedented diversity in many aspects of people's lives. It was meant to bring about an end to the period of stagnation and to introduce new era of rapid economic growth.

While *doi moi* policy emphasized the need for change in Vietnamese society, people welcomed a new orientation in order to build the foundation of “a rich people, a strong nation and an equitable, democratic and civilized society” (*dan giàu, nước mạnh, và một xã hội công bằng, dân chủ và văn minh*). In many ways, *doi moi* redefined the role of the state in development process. There are several signs of the integration of Viet Nam into regional and international arenas. For instance, in 1995 Viet Nam was recognized as an official member of ASEAN’s countries and diplomatically normalized its relations with the U.S. In 2001, Viet Nam and the U.S signed the bilateral trade agreement. Such progress has been affected by ambitious attempts towards modernization and development.

As Viet Nam moves increasingly towards a market oriented economy, many aspects of Vietnamese society have changed considerably. The Vietnamese people desired a better life for so long and the bitter experience of central planning led people to

support the new policies (Fforde, 1996, p. 227). Therefore, when *doi moi* was launched in 1986, a majority of population supported it. It was a surprise to many outside researchers, as Fforde highlights " perhaps the greatest success of Viet Nam during this time was to change the dominant social system without spilling blood, despite the violence that preceded reunification and the strong elements of compulsion within the neo-Stalinist programs that has been experienced by the population as a whole" (Fforde & deVylder, 1996, p. 228).

Economic liberalization has been a welcome relief for most Vietnamese. People are no longer fully dependent for their livelihoods on government. But, *doi moi* is not simply regarded as merely as an economic reform package to cope with the crisis of the mid-1980s. *Doi moi* aimed to reduce the poverty level and this task was largely successful. UNDP in the 2001 Report states that "the achievements in reducing poverty in Viet Nam have been impressive, by any standard" (p. 35). Based on the GSO/World Bank overall poverty line, the poverty incidence fell from over 70 percent in the mid-1980s to around 58 percent in 1993 and further to an estimated 37 per cent in 1998. Along with poverty reduction, hunger was nearly eradicated (UNDP, 2001). UNDP documents that Viet Nam shows significant improvements in the Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Poverty Index (HPI). With regard to the HDI, which combines progress in terms of income, health and education, Viet Nam now ranks 101<sup>st</sup> out of 162 countries worldwide (UNDP, 2001, p. 7). Over the last ten years, life expectancy increased to 68 years and adult literacy further improved to 94 percent. Table 3 compares Viet Nam's human development performance with that of some other Asian countries.

**Table 3. HDI ranking for selected countries (1999, out of 162 countries)**

Country	HDI rank	Life expectancy	Adult literacy	Combined Enrolment ratio	Real GDP per capita (PPP\$)	HDI
Japan	9	80.8	99.0	82	24,898	0.928
HongKong	24	79.4	93.3	63	22,909	0.880
Singapore	26	77.4	92.1	75	20,767	0.876
Malaysia	56	72.2	87.0	66	8,209	0.774
Thailand	66	69.9	95.3	60	6,132	0.757
Philippines	70	69.0	95.1	82	3,805	0.749
China P.R.	87	70.2	83.5	73	3,617	0.718
Viet Nam	101	67.8	93.1	67	1,860	0.682
Indonesia	102	65.8	86.3	65	2,857	0.677
India	115	62.9	56.5	56	2,248	0.571
Myanmar	118	56.0	84.4	55	1,027	0.551
Cambodia	121	56.4	68.2	62	1,361	0.541
Lao PDR	131	53.1	47.3	58	1,471	0.476

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2001, pp. 140-143

Despite a GDP per capita in 1999 of only US\$400, Viet Nam ranks high on some social development indicators: Life expectancy at birth is 67.8 years, the adult literacy rate is 93.1%, the combined first, second and third level gross enrolment ratio is 67% whereas the real GDP per capita is 1,860 PPP\$ (The GDP per capita of a country converted into US dollars on the basis of the purchasing power parity of the country's currency).

For many Vietnamese people, it was a magic change because we were able to escape from hunger in many areas and strive to reduce mass poverty. Since 1992, Viet Nam has become the world's second largest exporter of rice, after Thailand. This fact highlights the reforms begun in Vietnamese agriculture, the largest sector of the country's economy. This sector was the one where most of the employment was available and also where most of the poor were concentrated. Griffin provides his comment on this reform

process in which “efforts were concentrated where output could respond quickly, where supply elasticity was high” (Griffin, 1998, p. 15). As a result, Viet Nam is able to export rice, marine products, coffee, cashew nuts ... More significantly; *doi moi* has galvanized the talents and energies of millions of people for more diversified production. For instance, many other agricultural activities have been expanded, breaking with the past dominance of rice monocrop production in rural areas. Good examples are the substantial growth of aquaculture breeding in coastal areas, coffee and rubber planting, and cashew production in the Central Highland and South East (UNDP, 2001).

Viet Nam's long-term development plan, however, is to create an enabling environment in which trade, investment and stable economic conditions are important in order to improve the general standard of living. Adopting a renovation strategy aimed at getting rich has become a compellingly attractive from the perspective of policy makers in Viet Nam. *Doi moi* has also brought a tremendous amount of confusion, however. The collective is being dismantled, and the nature of the social order that will result from the mixed economy is not at all clear. The gap between rich and poor is growing, and socially negative elements (prostitution, crime and drugs) are seemingly on the rise.

A number of studies have been conducted by both in- and outside researchers during the renewal process in the last decade in Viet Nam. However, most studies have focused mainly on the shift from the central economy to the market economy, and policy level and state intervention. Fforde claims that "most studies take a top-down approach, using the assumption that state activities are key and central to change Viet Nam"



(Fforde & De Vylder, 1996, p.246)<sup>4</sup>. Many researchers tried to convince readers that experience from other countries shows clearly that macroeconomic policy reforms and market strengthening are crucial for economic growth. These above studies produced significant results, and they mostly addressed the environment of the market economy, trade and price liberalization, and macro frameworks. There are, however, few studies that focus on the social changes caused by *doi moi* in Viet Nam. I believe the lack of studies on social development in Viet Nam is definitely detrimental to development.

### **3.3 *Doi moi* and the role of education**

The 2001- UNDP report raises an interesting question when it addresses human development in Viet Nam. Why is Viet Nam distinguishable from other low income countries when it comes to human development? UNDP indicates that adult literacy and education enrollment rates are much higher in Viet Nam than in countries with similar income levels (UNDP, 2001, p. 37). Most of these studies document that Viet Nam's education system, with a wide network of schools throughout the country, has recorded high rates of enrollment and basic literacy. Adult literacy has risen to 94 percent and net school enrolment rates now amount to 92 and 74 percent for primary and lower secondary schools, respectively (UNDP, 2001, p. 6). Ethnic minority children have increasingly enrolled in schools while gender inequalities have narrowed. The social

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<sup>4</sup> Examples of this top-down approach are numerous: Per Ronnas and Orjan Sjoberg in *Doi moi- Economic Reform and Development Policies in Viet Nam* (1990); by Nguyen Sinh Cuc in *Thuc trang nong nghiep, nong thon va nong dan Viet Nam 1976-1990* (The situation of agriculture, the countryside, and the peasantry in Viet Nam, 1976-1990) ( 1991); by Brian Van Arkadie in *Managing the Renewal Process: The Case of Viet Nam* (1993); by Dwight Perkins in *Viet Nam Cai cach Kinh te Theo Huong Rong Bay* (Viet Nam-Economic Reform on the Trail of the Dragon) (1994), by Benedict Kerkvliet and Doug Portes eds, in *Rural Transformation and Economic change in Viet Nam* (1995); Fforde & de Vylder in *From Plan to Market : The Economic Transition in Viet Nam* (1996); Keith Griffin in *Economic Reform in Viet Nam* (1998); by Litvack J. and Dennis A. Rondinelli in *Market Reform in Viet Nam: Building Institutions for Development* (1999) and others.

indicators in Viet Nam show a human development paradox – low income, but a social performance comparable with middle income countries. Table 4 shows Viet Nam's HDI from 1995 to 2001:

**Table 4: Viet Nam's Human Development Index over time**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
(Reference year)	(1992)	(1993)	(1994)	(1995)	(1997)	(1998)	(1999)
Life expectancy at birth (years)	65.2	65.5	66.0	66.4	67.4	67.8	67.8
Adult literacy (%)	91.9	92.5	93	93.7	91.9	92.9	93.1
Combined enrolment rate (%)	49	51	55	55	62	63	67
Real GDP per capita (PPP US\$)	1,010	1,040	1,208	1,236	1,630	1,689	1860
Human Development Index(value)	0.611	0.618	0.634	0.639	0.666	0.671	0.682
Human Development Index (rank)	120	121	121	122	110	108	101

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 1995-2001, p. 30

While the answer for this above question may come from different explanations, it is clear that during the *doi moi* process Viet Nam has focused on human development. In UNDP's definition, human development is a process of "expanding choices in a sustainable manner so that people can enjoy longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives" (UNDP, 1998, p. 1). Viet Nam considers human development as a central commitment in Viet Nam's strategy for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation:

The basic concept of the strategy is to place human beings at the center of development and to promote the potential of individuals and communities... The ultimate aim is wholesome, well-balanced and sustainable development. This is a development strategy for people and by the people -- a strategy which is centered on the task of caring for, fostering and developing human potential, which considers human beings as the most powerful engine of development, the creative energy, the source of material and spiritual wealth of a society and, at the same time a strategy which sees as its highest goal the well-being, freedom and happiness of human beings.

(SRVN, Country Report to the World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995, p. 2)

This national report as well as other official documents recognizes that people are considered as the principal end of all development efforts. Viet Nam's transition to a market-oriented economy promises a better life and increases choices in jobs, education and health care through flourishing market opportunities and competition. Obviously, social change from traditional to modern society involved many other changes such as the integration and disintegration of social organizations, the identification of roles for the government and organizations and the adjustment of social benefits, social concepts and social values. Needless to say, economic development will lead to a dramatic change in social systems, living styles, behavioral activities and moral values. In effect, it will be a process of social modernization. Inevitably, Viet Nam is experiencing many of the characteristics of social transformation in its social structure. Griffin points out that *doi moi* has been "pragmatic, experimental and cautious and the authorities have been able to tolerate it during the transition" (Griffin, 1998, p. 13).

Markets, as Fforde and deVylder (1996, p. 227) point out, imply capital. Poor countries lack capital. In many ways, Viet Nam is still weak in coping with the dynamics of a market economy and the social changes required by modernization. The shift to a market economy in Viet Nam means also a shift in the social relations within which Vietnamese people worked and lived. Many questions were raised when the country was shifted to a market economy. For instance, does this transition imply the creation of a set of democratic institutions, rules, and practices? To what extent does the new institutional framework give rise to social trust and norms? Does education play a role in the *doi moi* process? Has education in Viet Nam been regarded as one of the contributing factors to human development? The questions have raised several controversies among both

international and Vietnamese scholars. In the case of Viet Nam, I think, a special caution is needed when applying Western theories in explaining the relationship between education and economic development. This is not to say that Viet Nam is an exceptional case. But it would be better to carefully take into account the ideological and historical contexts in Viet Nam when explaining Vietnamese human development.

### **3.4 Impact of *doi moi* on education in Viet Nam**

Embarking on the path of *doi moi*, it is inevitable that Viet Nam changes its system of education, improves the quality of education and transforms the concept of education in order to serve the needs of the country as it rapidly pursues social-economic development.

#### **3.4.1 The State and Education**

If education is viewed as having effects on economic development, education plays a significant role in regard to its effect on social and political development. Coleman indicates, “As is the state, so is the school” (Coleman, 1965). This implies that schools are the forum for the political ideology of the state and contribute to the social attitudes and behaviors of learners. Several studies by Vietnamese researchers show consistent findings about the political and social functions of education in Vietnam. Schools have been designated to fulfill the mission of maintaining political and social stability (Pham, 1998, p. 12). The Vietnamese government places education as its highest priority because the state needs to maintain a stable political and social environment to secure its legitimacy. Education is one of the public domains that have been put under the government's agenda. Over the past decades, most of the major educational policies that have dominated the content, process, ideology and institutions of



education have been under government control. From the government's point of view, education should serve the needs of the state, and be used to meet its social, economic and political goals. The primary goals of Vietnamese education are to instill students with basic skills enabling them to continue learning for a lifetime, both inside and outside the classroom, for the purposes of national modernization and sustainable development. Improving the quality of education in Viet Nam means more people going into the educational system and coming out with appropriate skills to enhance their quality of life (Pham, 1995, p. 59)

It is in this context that Vietnam has attained relatively broad-based education levels, i.e. an almost universal enrollment for five-year compulsory primary education and literacy, yearly increases in educational investment and the expansion of higher education including private colleges.

In terms of maintaining cultural identity, social norms and values during the *doi moi* process in Viet Nam, policy makers in Vietnam have viewed it as its top agenda. Clearly embedded in Vietnamese culture is the tradition of holding education in high regard. Policy makers in Viet Nam have used education as a vehicle to preserve cultural heritage as well as to promote socio-economic development. In the resolution of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenum of the Party Central Committee issued on December 14, 1996, the following statement was made:

The key tasks and goals of education are to train people and generations committed to the ideals of national independence, endowed with good ethics, and staunch will for national construction and defense; for national industrialization and modernization; preserving and maximizing national cultural values; able to receive the quintessence of the culture of humanity, to maximize the potentials of the Vietnamese; community-conscious and promoting individual dynamism, mastering modern science and state- of the -art technology; creative, skilled in



practice, industry-behavioral, highly-organized and disciplinary; healthy, successors, both " professionally and politically sound"  
(Resolution of the 2<sup>nd</sup> plenum of the Party Central Committee, December 14, 1996, p. 5)

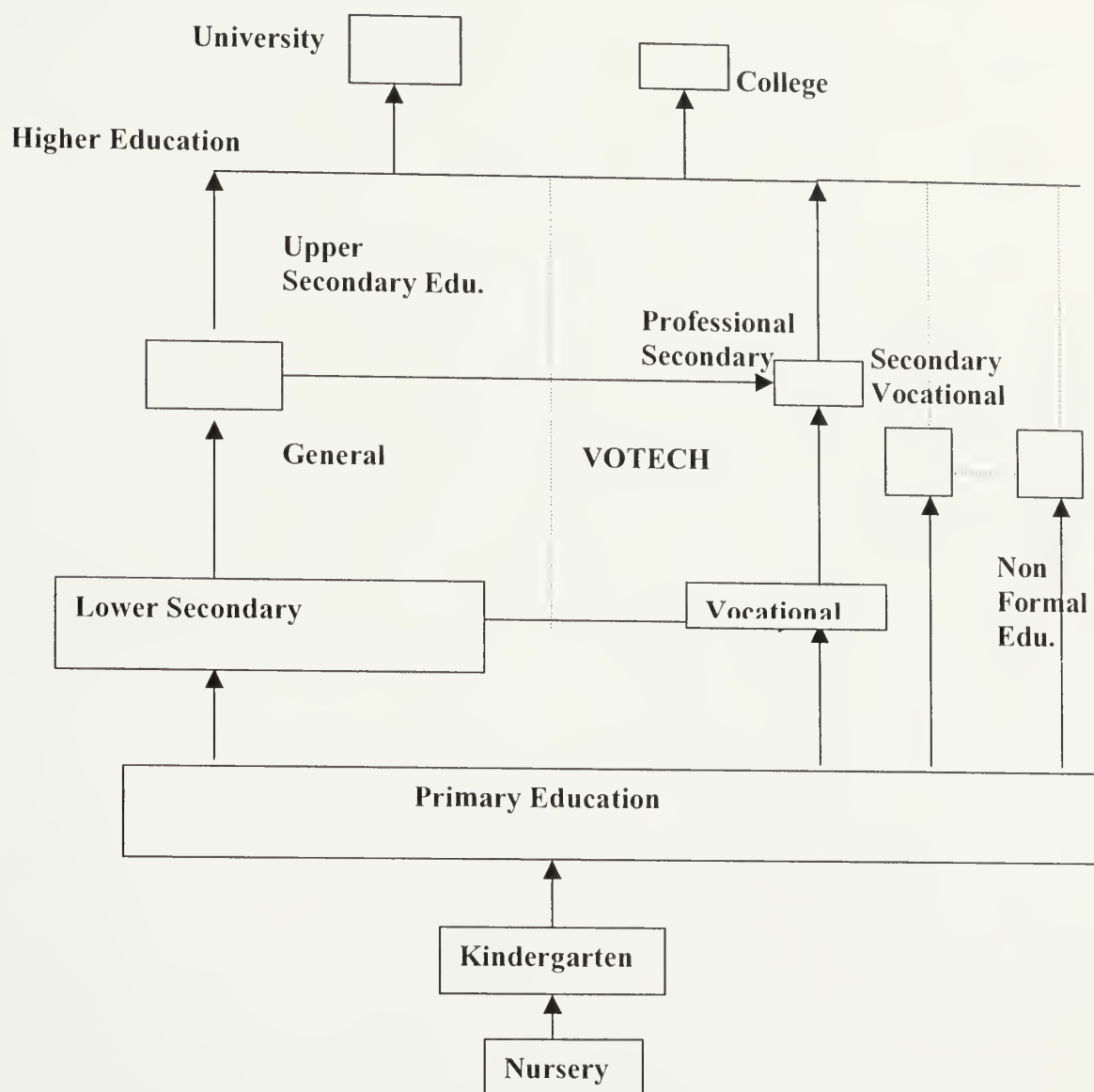
This paragraph shows that from the official point of view, the Vietnamese government has been firm in enhancing Vietnamese cultural identity among the Vietnamese people while it is embarking on the path of modernization. In other words, the government's point of view is to combine Vietnamese cultural traditions with new elements of the market economy. Vietnamese have made efforts to maintain their cultural heritage in order to strengthen their nation, community, family and individual well-being. On other hand, the above statement shows the ambitious goals of the government. They include factors of maximizing positive aspects of the new policy brought by *doi moi* while minimizing the negative aspects of market mechanisms on education and training. The tendency toward "commercialized" education and training is to be opposed. Equally important under this policy is enhancing cultural identity among young children. Core values of traditional Vietnamese culture are repeatedly emphasized in school textbooks. With respect to education, it is fully recognized that the social effect of education now can only be felt ten or twenty years later. The social effects of elementary education can be seen only when children become adults. There are social benefits to be derived from investment in education in Vietnam. For instance, education has the effect of slowing population growth, a critical problem in Vietnam. The education of women is also closely related to child health, as children of educated mothers lead healthier lives, thus decreasing the burden on the health system. Such examples indicate that the role of education cannot be limited only to economic growth.

In short, the Vietnamese government places education and training as one of national priorities because investment in education means investment in development.

### **3.4.2 The Current Organization of Education in Viet Nam**

The education system in Viet Nam consists of primary schools (five years), lower secondary schools (four years), senior secondary schools (three years), and universities (four years). The government enacts laws pertaining to pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Responsibilities for planning and the direction of education and training are mainly taken by the Ministry of Education and Training, although many educational institutions are the responsibility of particular ministries. The administration of education is subject to government control, and is divided into three levels in accordance with the hierarchy of the governmental system: the central Ministry of Education and Training is in charge of legislation and administration of education in general; the provincial departments of education are in charge of provincial/municipal formal and non-formal education and the district bureaus of education are in charge of education in each of the districts. At the provincial level, the Provincial Education and Training Service (PETS) directs educational activities in the province. The PETS also oversees secondary teacher training schools, which provide pre-service training and in-service training within the province. At the district level, the education and training system is administered by the District Education and Training Service (DETS). The DETS manages district primary and lower secondary schools. At the commune level, the primary school is the basic educational unit. See Figure 2 about the current organization of education in Viet Nam.

**Figure 2. Organizational Structure of Viet Nam's Education and Training System**

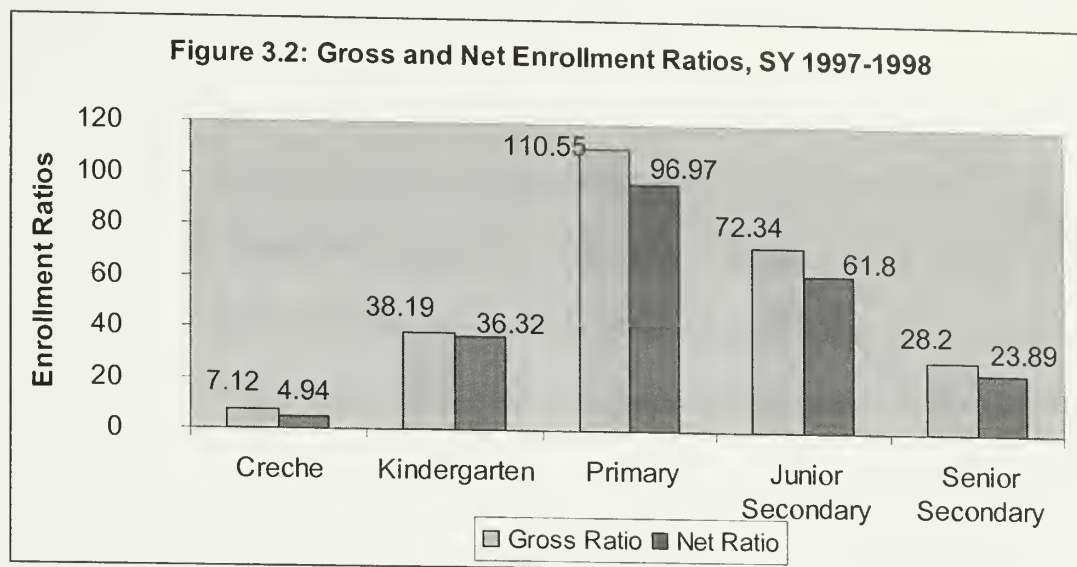


Viet Nam's educational system comprises all levels from nursery school to post-graduate. According to official data of the Ministry of Education and Training in 1999, there are nearly 13,076 primary schools, 7,066 junior secondary schools, 952 senior secondary schools and more than 100 tertiary institutions in the whole country (MOET, Education Management Information Center, 1999). Primary schools exist in all hamlets

and villages, junior secondary schools in all communes, senior secondary schools in all districts. Throughout the last decade, Vietnamese government policy-makers and development planners have emphasized the importance of universal education and the need to expand the educational system. Universal primary education has been laid out as the foundation for the development of education. This task has been largely implemented when Viet Nam adopted a plan of action called "Education for All" (EFA).

Literacy and universal primary education have seen nation-wide development. The 2000-EFA report indicates that by the end of 1998, 47 out of 61 provinces and cities throughout the country were recognized as achieving the national standard on illiteracy eradication and UPE (EFA Report, 2000, p. 56). Tertiary enrollments, which comprised 163,000 students in 1993, had surpassed twice this number by 1995 (Moock, 1999, p. 101). According to the government's estimates, the number of tertiary students would increase by another 50 percent between 1995 and the end of the year 2000. Secondary education as well as vocational and technical training are also to be expanded. The educational expansion during the 1990s can be explained by the increased level of government funding to all levels of the educational sector. See Figure 3 on the Gross and Net Enrollment Rates for the general educational system in Viet Nam in school year 1997-1998.

**Figure 3. Gross and Net School enrolments, School Year 1997-1998**



Source: Educational Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Training, 1999, p. 19

The net enrollment ratio (NER) presents a better measure than the gross enrollment (GER). It is an indicator that children are enrolled in their proper school-ages. Figure 3 also documents how when children at primary schools go to school not at their school ages, the GER reaches 110 percent while the NER is 93 percent. It implies that many children may go school in their later ages or they dropout or repeat their grades several years during the cycle.

The most important evidence of the Vietnamese effort from the 1990s is that education has been written into the legal framework. On December 2, 1998, the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the National Assembly of the SR Viet Nam adopted the Law on Education, Viet Nam's first education law. The enactment of the law has had an definite impact on educational development. According to the Report on National Program Action for Children 2001-2010, government agencies and local administrations have joined efforts by increasing the budget for the universal of primary education and literacy. In the



framework of the socialization of education, many movements, such as “All people accompany the children to school” (*Ngay toan dan dua tre den truong*), “Universal of Primary Education” (*Pho cap giao duc tieu hoc*), and “Eradication of Illiteracy” (*Xoa mu chu*), have had a strong support from the people (Document of National Program Action for Children 2001-2010).

### 3.4.3 Some Statistics Resulting From *Doi Moi*

Although Viet Nam has had an impressive level of basic literacy and numeracy as compared to countries with similar incomes in the region, critical issues have emerged. During the *doi moi* process there were tangible conflicts due to changes in the social structure. For instance, the renovation process in Viet Nam has brought both positive and uncertain elements to Vietnamese society. Positive elements were seen through several economic indicators and the improvement of living conditions for many Vietnamese households. *Doi moi* brought important changes in Viet Nam, such as an elimination of the many regulations restricting or proscribing the private sector's role in education and training. New decrees and resolutions were passed that encouraged the private sector's expanded involvement. Several types of institutions were set up, such as “semi-public” (*Ban cong*), “people -founded” (*dan lap*) and private schools (*tu lap*)<sup>5</sup>, although they account for a very small proportion of total enrollment (Moock, 1999, p. 97). *Doi moi* has essentially privatized many aspects of social assistance which people previously looked to the government to provide. User fees are now charged for secondary and

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<sup>5</sup> *Semipublic school (Ban cong)* means that the educational facility is owned by the state and managed by a public authority at the central, provincial, district, or commune level, but all operating costs are covered by the student fees.

*People founded institutions (Dan lap)* are owned and managed by non-government organizations or private associations, such as trade unions, cooperatives, youth organizations and women's associations.

*Private school (tu lap)* are owned and managed by private individuals. Fully private institutions are not allowed in general education (primary and secondary), only in vocational and technical education and in training [define training] and pre-school education.

tertiary education, but not primary education. The impact of the *doi moi* reforms on education was significant especially in terms of the abandonment of the old system of subsidies for higher education, the training system devoted only for state employees, the accountability in educational management etc.

The negative aspects can be seen through the instability of guaranteed public sector jobs for upper secondary and higher education graduates and a visible gap between urban and rural areas in terms of the delivery of education services. The school fees are generally low; however, these fees are burdensome for poor households.

While educational expansion in primary education has been growing rapidly throughout the last decade, the enrollments at the lower secondary and upper secondary fell sharply in the later part of the 1980s and early 1990s in the absolute term (World Bank, 1996, p.16). During this period, the rate fell by some 43 percent between 1988 and 1992. Why did this happen? Given that the rate of return to investment in education appears to have been highest for primary education, lower for tertiary, and lowest for secondary, the secondary enrollments fell off sharply and tertiary enrollments were nearly static for a couple of years. When the *doi moi* process began, the cost of school attendance and fees increased to add additional burdens on households. Although the tuition charged at secondary levels was low in general, poor parents still bear their financial burden in order to keep their children in high schools. Limited jobs for graduates from secondary schools have discouraged a continual increase in secondary education. In addition, for parents in rural areas, the “return to family farming meant that most rural households needed the labor of their teenage children on the farm” (Booth, 1997, p. 246).

The enrollment rates at both junior and senior secondary levels have slowly risen again since 1993. Because of the decline in enrollments, the government began a process of reallocation of resources within the educational sector. *The World Bank Education Financing Sector Study in 1996* reports that between 1991 and 1994, the proportion of state budget allocations to primary education fell from 38 to 30 percent, while the proportion to junior and senior secondary education rose from 19 to 27 percent. More importantly, as *doi moi* has brought many benefits to Vietnamese society, parents and students have seen the benefits of secondary education the most and are committed to continuing studies beyond the level of primary education. Both students and their families value school education and are willing to postpone entrance to the labor market in order to complete junior secondary education. This explains the increase in enrollments and retention of secondary education in the second half of the 1990s, even in the absence of explicit policy decisions in this area.

The Government of Vietnam is currently preparing its *Ten Year Socio-Economic Development Strategy* which lays out the strategic directions for Vietnam during the first decade of this new millennium. This document envisions Vietnam in 2010 as a country without poverty, with a rapidly modernizing economy, and with broad social equity. Vietnam considers human development to be a people-centered approach and such an orientation is expressed as a central commitment in Vietnam's strategy for socio-economic development. The Government's Development Strategy formulates a broad range of objectives for education and training. For instance, the aims are to ensure that all children at the age of primary education attend school, and universal access to

secondary education in the whole country by 2010 and the universal of junior senior secondary education by the 2020 (Tran, 2000, p.233).

#### **3.4.4 Patterns of Educational Attainment by Ethnicity and Gender**

Since the *doi moi* process, issues surrounding ethnic minorities have received much attention in policy formation and in assistance programs of the government, mass organizations, NGOs, and donor agencies. Minorities can be found in the top levels of government, party and the National Assembly (17 percent of delegates in the National Assembly) (UNDP, 1998, p. 61). The Vietnamese government has worked out specific policies and special treatments in order to help mountainous people catch up with lowland people, and has made great efforts to develop and preserve the traditional cultural identities of each ethnic minority group. At present, the programs of providing iodized salt for remote villages, equipping villages with health care and hygienic stations, fighting malaria, building free boarding schools for ethnic minority children, settling agriculture and fixed residences, projects of creating new cultural agencies for minority peoples, as well as studying and developing the traditional culture of each ethnic minority group have obtained satisfactory results (UNDP, 1998, p. 60).

The government has made many efforts together with technical assistance and funding from international donors and NGOs to improve health and educational services in remote areas. Several programs and projects to improve educational facilities in areas with high concentrations of ethnic minorities have been supported by UNICEF, the World Bank, and other donors (these programs have included bilingual education in four minority languages, targeted specifically at ethnic minority children). To encourage the

participation of ethnic minorities, residential schools offer free accommodation, food, clothing and textbooks, in addition to providing alternative basic education classes.

While the Vietnamese government in general and the Ministry of Education and Training in particular have issued special decrees and special policies to support the schooling of ethnic minority children, an evident gap in educational enrollments indeed still exists between peoples living in the deltas, those living in mountain areas, and among ethnic minorities themselves. A closer look at regional differences in educational reveals several critical problems. Table 5 shows that ethnic inequalities in education remain considerable.

**Table 5 Trends in education environment rates by ethnicity**

	1992/93		1997/98	
	Kinh people	Ethnic minorities	Kinh people	Ethnic minorities
Primary school	90.6	63.8	93.2	82.2
Lower secondary school	33.6	6.6	66.2	36.5
Senior secondary school	7.9	2.1	31.9	8.1
Post secondary school	3.2	0.8	10.5	1.4

Source: Viet Nam Living Standard Surveys 1992.1993 and 1997/1998.

Table 5 reveals that the children of ethnic minorities are far behind the Kinh majority in all levels of education in terms of enrollments. In regard to junior and senior secondary education, the enrollment rate of ethnic minority children is very low (36. 5 percent at the junior secondary level and 8.1 percent at the senior level) according to the data in the Viet Nam Standard of Living Survey, 1997-1998. The UNDP Report documents that policies and programs developed at the national level are often found to not take adequate account of the special problems, needs and aspirations of particular



ethnic minority communities. Ethnic minority student participation in basic schools ranks lowest nation-wide (1998, p. 93). A number of studies from NGO's have identified several familiar reasons for this such as constant migration, high costs, pressures of households, and poor command of the Vietnamese language.

Gender inequalities in education have narrowed as many studies document (UNDP, 2001, 1998; World Bank, 1996). These studies report that enrolment rates at primary and lower secondary schools are similar for boys and girls, but the gender gap is still significant at higher levels of education. The 2001 UNDP report emphasizes that the gender gap is wider amongst the poor and in rural areas. Table 6 presents the proportion of boys and girls at school in two Viet Nam Standard of Living Surveys, 1992/1993 and 1997/1998.

**Table 6. Proportion of boys and girls at school**

		1992/1993	1997/1998
Primary school	Male	49.8	50.4
	Female	50.2	49.6
Lower secondary school	Male	51.8	49.7
	Female	49.2	50.3
Senior secondary school	Male	57.9	52.3
	Female	42.1	47.7
	Male	59.0	56.3
	Female	41.0	43.5

Source: Viet Nam Living Standard Surveys 1992/1993 and 1997/1998.

### 3.4.5 Efficiency

The rates of dropout, repetition, completion and survival rates are important indicators of an education system's efficiency. Numerous studies documented large drop-out and repetition rates in each cycle of the education system, especially among ethnic minority children and children in rural areas (World Bank, 1996; UNDP 2001,

SCF 1999 and ADB 2001). The 2001-UNDP report documents that the national completion rate is less than seventy percent with significant regional variation. About thirty percent of children aged 12-20 drop out from school. For children of low income households, the drop out rate is around forty percent (UNDP, 2001, p. 39). The World Bank study in 1996 indicates the dropout rates in Vietnam are high, especially in the Central Highlands of the Me Kong River Delta (World Bank, 1996). The Table 7 shows dimensions of the dropout problem.

**Table 7 Repetition and Dropout Rates in General Education between  
SY 94-95**

Rate		Primary				Junior Secondary				Senior Secondary		
Region	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12
Repetition Rate												
Northern Uplands	13%	8%	5%	5%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	4%	3%	2%
Red River Delta	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
North Central	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Central Coast	14%	9%	6%	6%	2%	5%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Central Highlands	10%	7%	6%	6%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	0%
Southeast	8%	5%	4%	6%	3%	5%	5%	4%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Mekong River Delta	15%	11%	8%	8%	5%	7%	4%	3%	4%	4%	2%	1%
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Dropout Rate												
Northern Uplands	3%	1%	0%	13%	5%	9%	9%	9%	2%	6%	3%	10%
Red River Delta	7%	9%	7%	8%	2%	6%	6%	5%	2%	4%	4%	5%
North Central	6%	5%	3%	15%	7%	8%	8%	8%	10%	3%	1%	6%
Central Coast	5%	4%	3%	9%	8%	13%	13%	13%	12%	10%	4%	5%
Central Highlands	13%	8%	3%	17%	9%	29%	29%	30%	18%	17%	15%	9%
Southeast	6%	0%	0%	7%	7%	11%	11%	8%	2%	8%	7%	2%
Mekong River Delta	16%	6%	5%	14%	15%	17%	17%	15%	8%	13%	8%	16%
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7%</b>

Source: MOET, 1996, p. 90

The cohort survival from primary through the completion of senior secondary is generally low in Viet Nam. While repetition is most significant at the primary level with 10 percent repeating grade one, seven percent repeating grade two, the dropout rate is

high in junior secondary education with a 10 percent dropout from grade 6 and an 11 percent dropout from grade 7 (World Bank, 1996, p. 74). The high dropout rate at the beginning of junior education points to a need for the improvement of teaching methods to help students stay in school. According to the World Bank's estimate, it takes 6.8 student-years to finish the primary education level (a five year cycle), and an additional 5.1 student-years to produce a junior secondary education (a four year cycle). Given the 1995 rates of dropout and repetition, the World Bank calculates that only 1, 904 of the original 10,000 would complete senior secondary education in twelve years (World Bank, 1996, pp. 74-75).

The Vietnamese government has recognized the dropout problem as very serious, particularly at the junior and senior secondary levels. There have been some explanations for this problem. The most often heard explanation for the alarming dropout rates in the rural areas is the influence of the contract system in agriculture, which makes it attractive for peasant households to withdraw their teenage children from school so that they can work on the family land or look after young children. This is, for example, how the Ministry of Education and Training explains the decrease in students' attendance rates in rural areas (MOET, 2000).

Another explanation for the low cohort survival rate is the selection of students to higher levels of education. Selection takes places at all levels of education, but most important are the screenings carried out between junior and senior secondary school and between senior secondary school and the university. In the first of these selections, it is decided who will continue in academic track schools, who will go to the vocational schools leading to jobs as skilled workers and technicians, and who will leave the

educational system and find less valued, manual jobs. In the second selection, the few students who will receive a post-secondary education are chosen. These selections have even greater social importance in Vietnam due to the traditional views for upward social mobility in Viet Nam.

While educational expansion is important, the quality of education cannot be overlooked. In Viet Nam, as was the case right from the earliest days of the Vietnamese education system, education policy has emphasized quantitative expansion regardless of its qualitative implications. Quality standards have been disregarded for the expansion goal. Questions on how to improve educational quality, how to provide general secondary education beyond the primary education are not clearly designed in the agenda of the Ministry of Education (Tran, 2000)

Another appalling issue is the past approach of static learning that relied almost exclusively on the rote memorization of facts – a method of learning still dominant in the current school system. Tran candidly comments on teaching methods in the current system as “quite conservative” (Tran, 2000, p. 237). It often happens in classrooms that the teacher reads, while the pupils simply take notes. Study is passive because students are forced to memorize instead of thinking. A modern dynamic and flexible system that encourages creative and innovative thinking has not yet been built into the curriculum and the teaching/learning process. Teaching often degenerates into spoon-feeding students with facts and details to be memorized, leaving no room for the development of practical skills or the ability to solve problems.

### 3.4.6 Shadow Education

Viet Nam, like other developing countries, has faced the rise of shadow education. Shadow education consists of tutoring and after-school classes that are intended to improve academic performance. Some research (Stevenson & Baker, 1992) has examined shadow education in industrialized countries. Bray in his monograph (1999) asserts that “private tutoring has grown to become a vast enterprise” in recent times (p. 17). He points out that tutoring often brings social inequalities because tutoring consumes human and financial resources which quickly burden the parents financially. There are, however, several positive elements that are derived from tutoring. For instance, students can reinforce their knowledge and skills from taking tutoring classes. In such a way, Bray argues that tutoring may reduce the workload of the teachers, helping students to understand the materials that are presented during the ordinary school day. He acknowledges that although private tutoring is quickly expanded in many societies, “it has received little attention by researchers and planners” (1999, p. 18). Reasons for this, according to Bray, are varied. For instance, private tutoring is not in the control of most government data-collection system. Parents and students are reluctant to provide information on their earnings and fees for tutoring. Researchers may find difficulties in getting accurate information on activities which mostly happen behind closed doors.

In Viet Nam, shadow education includes private tutoring and school-based tutoring, exam preparation classes, and mock exams. Many schools provide tutoring as well as extra classes after school hours for an additional cost. Some parents hire private tutors in an attempt to ensure that their children are a step ahead of others. Tutoring is



most common in the later years of junior secondary education when students are preparing for the national exams to be selected into senior secondary schools.

Tutoring programs have spread rapidly in urban areas, especially in big cities like Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hai Phong. While some small towns in rural areas may also provide tutoring, rural areas have lagged behind in the implementation of shadow education. Tutoring is less common in rural areas for various reasons. Rural children often must walk greater distances to school and they may be expected to work in the household or help with farm work after school and on weekends. This leaves less discretionary time for tutoring. In addition to regional differences in the availability of tutoring, the cost of tutoring results in an inequality of access to shadow education. Whether school-based or home-based, tutoring is an additional educational expense.

Shadow education is a very sensitive issue and it causes much debate in Viet Nam. Although many criticisms have arisen, the government has not come up with any definite solution for dealing with the rampant phenomena on private tutoring. Recently, the Ministry of Education and Training has tried to reduce private tutoring and replace it with school-based tutoring (Tran, 1998). The Ministry of Education and Training may also be concerned with the tendency for teachers to teach less during the actual school day, for which they are paid by the government, and instead save their energy for after-school tutoring sessions, for which they are paid by parents. It appears that the Ministry of Education and Training will not issue any specific order to ban private tutoring. Because of this, school-based tutoring and private tutoring continue to grow in popularity among teachers and students.

For the time being, little research has been done to examine the consequences of shadow education in Viet Nam. In my household survey, the data reflects a difference in tutoring between town-based and rural schools. Although my survey shed light on this phenomenon, it does not dig in-depth into the nature and roots of shadow education, given that the area of the study is a focus on rurality in Viet Nam. In the next section, I discuss issues of rural education in Viet Nam during the *doi moi* process.

### **3.5 Rural Education in the 1990s**

The preceding discussion documents the far-reaching influence of *doi moi* policies on educational priorities (and only on national priorities, not local ones) during the last decade in Viet Nam. Aggregate indicators of educational systems provide evidence that *doi moi* has brought profound changes in education. However, the impact of *doi moi* on structures of opportunity has been, in practice, more complex. Viet Nam's primary focus has been on economic modernization, and the attention of reformers has been directed toward industrialized countries. Vietnamese leaders and the majority of the urban population have seen Viet Nam on the road to industrialization and modernization.

In general, Viet Nam's educational and economic reforms in the 1990s have gradually altered educational policies, structures, and incentives in rural areas as well. The 1998 UNDP report shows that while urban children enjoy greater access to primary and secondary education since *doi moi*, some children in rural and isolated areas face "reduced opportunities to go to school" (UNDP, 1998, p. 83). Many pupils cannot continue to go to secondary schools unless their families can afford to pay school fees and school supplies. This constitutes evidence of inequity in education because while

“80 percent of Viet Nam's population lives in rural areas, rural high school students account for only 42 percent of total enrollment” (UNDP, 1998, p. 84). Under conditions of constrained resources, educational funds increasingly target key-point schools in urban areas where high returns on investments are expected. By contrast, the limited facilities available in rural areas were increasingly supported at the local level. As a result, various fees for school existence were charged to parents. In this section, I discuss major rural educational issues in the 1990s that are emerged during the *doi moi* process.

### **3.5.1 Inequality**

Pham (1998, p. 57) admits that equality in education has become “a pressing problem.” He indicates that the gap in education between rural and urban areas, as well as between plain and mountainous regions, is widely visible. Though the Law on Education points out that all citizens shall have equal opportunity to receive education, the existence of inequality in educational opportunity is a reality. The Intercensal Demographic Survey in 1994 revealed that rural children attend school in lower percentages whether measured by age bracket, sex, or in aggregate. Rural children have lower percentages in attaining any level of education. For instance, while the percentage of urban children completing primary school is only 1.2 times higher than for rural children, the urban percentage finishing upper secondary is more than three times greater than for rural children. Table 8 provides the rate of Enrolment by Age, Sex and Urban and Rural areas in 1994.

**Table 8. Enrollment rates by age, sex, and urban and rural areas**

Age	Rate of enrollment in 1994					
	Urban		Rural		Total	For 1989
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
10	97.57	98.21	92.32	90.35	92.0	87.26
11	95.30	96.22	92.31	88.12	91.0	85.31
12	95.13	88.97	86.72	76.11	83.0	80.72
13	92.08	90.88	77.91	57.98	73.0	70.06
14	87.05	72.20	60.72	44.64	58.0	56.72
15	66.01	65.52	44.36	29.07	42.0	42.55
16	45.07	52.34	33.75	21.39	31.0	32.33
17	43.39	42.01	24.23	12.27	23.0	21.15
18	26.20	29.14	16.35	8.09	15.0	11.93
19	19.63	11.95	8.57	5.74	9.0	5.47
Total	72.53	69.78	62.64	50.92	59.46	51.43

Source: Inter-Censal Demographic Survey, 1994, p. 20

Inequality in education is seen more visibly at higher levels of education.

Children in rural areas and children of the poor have faced many difficulties in furthering their level of tertiary education. Tran voices the concern that the “ number of university students coming from worker’s and farmers’ families, especially from remote and mountain areas, and those of ethnic minority groups is shrinking” (Tran, 2000, p. 236).

### **3.5.2 Rising Costs**

One characteristic of education during the *doi moi* process has been the rising cost to individuals. School fees are charged from junior secondary schools, although several categories of secondary school students are exempt from fees. Children of deceased or seriously wounded soldiers, children with disabilities, children living in mountainous or remote areas and children of ethnic minority groups are eligible for exemption from those school fees. Children from poor families with certificates from local officials can be exempted from half of their tuition and fees. The charges levied at the school level are

calculated on a per child basis rather than tied to income levels and represent a certain amount per child enrolled. Table 9 is a tabulation of Household Spending per Student enrolled by level of education. This tabulation draws on the 1996 Viet Nam Social Sector Survey.

**Table 9. Household Spending per Year per Student Enrolled by Level of Education (VND per student per year)**

	Pre-school	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
<b>URBAN</b>				
Amount paid to school	126,709	50,130	85,055	146,569
School fees	81,250	379	33,500	82,823
School improvement fees	35,000	29,370	28,347	37,113
Parent association fees	4,259	10,201	10,244	11,619
Insurance	6,200	10,180	12,964	15,015
Other out-of-pocket payments	388,291	368,642	594,436	853,461
Textbooks	360	32,888	54,243	86,352
School supplies/materials	5,566	30,798	46,334	71,521
Uniforms	12,235	46,649	72,163	90,718
Tutoring	5,147	65,339	182,750	356,310
Transportation	1,559	2,777	14,779	12,003
Meals away from home	356,115	157,873	191,971	212,493
Other	7,309	32,320	32,196	24,063
Total including meals	515,001	418,772	679,490	1,000,030
Total excluding meals	158,886	260,899	487,519	787,537
<b>RURAL</b>				
Amount paid to school	27,114	26,749	53,858	141,724
School fees	13,968	291	25,608	91,687
School improvement fees	7,058	16,947	19,093	33,444
Parent association fees	991	3,321	1,840	5,093
Insurance	5,097	6,191	7,317	11,500
Other out-of-pocket payments	54,491	112,868	174,883	449,519
Textbooks	1,190	22,500	38,106	73,208
School supplies/materials	2,836	19,421	33,620	53,493
Uniforms	8,985	26,907	43,606	61,732
Tutoring	-	5,825	24,093	120,472
Transportation	-	757	3,604	24,254
Meals away from home	39,737	34,785	26,045	88,014
Other	1,743	2,674	5,809	28,345
Total including meals	81,605	139,618	228,741	591,242
Total excluding meals	41,868	104,832	202,696	503,228
Source: VSSS 1996, p. 54				
Exchange rate in June 1996: US\$ 1= VND 11,013				

Although primary education is free to all children in Viet Nam, parents expect to pay different types of fees. It is estimated, on average, that additional fees are to be



around VND 80, 000 per year (exchange rate in June 2001 US \$ 1= VND 15,100) in urban areas, and VND 16,000 in most rural areas. With contributions to parent-teacher associations and materials, the total amount is estimated to be around VND 141, 000 and VND 48, 000, respectively in urban and rural areas. Secondary school fees vary more widely and often several multiples of primary school fees (UNDP, 1998). According to the Ministry of Education and Training's Guidelines, parents are responsible for many supplementary levies to cover teacher salary bonuses, classroom materials, and a share of school building and maintenance costs. Parents have to supply their own child's needs for school textbooks, notebooks, pens and other supplies. These can add up to a high amount for parents, especially if they are poor and they have several children at school age. Additional fees pose a burden for many low income families.

Another issue is that the financial situation of Vietnamese junior and senior secondary schools is different and not uniform. While city schools receive considerable state support, almost all rural schools are funded by the local community and the voluntary contribution from parents. As a result, the financial responsibility for rural education rests with the local levels and leads to a considerable difference in standard between provinces, districts and even villages. Though the standard of education not only depends on economic factors, Vietnamese researchers comparing richer and poorer villages have found significant positive correlations between high per capita income levels and the degree of the universal of primary education. (Tran & Nguyen, 2000).

### 3.5.3 Relevance of Education

Although there has been a significant quantitative growth and expansion of Vietnamese's education system during the 1990s, the impact of education on Viet Nam's rural development needs to be carefully examined. There are several factors to be considered. First, there is the inertia of educational institutions as well as the long gestation period of educational investments, with students spending 2 to 3 years in school to become functionally literate, and another 8 to 10 years to complete secondary education, or 13 to 16 years, at least, to complete all of the steps to a university degree. Therefore, any outcome of the current education system needs a certain period of time before it can be assessed.

Parents and Vietnamese researchers have spoken out against the irrelevance of educational programs for rural areas. The irrelevance can be traced in curriculum development process. First, the centralized nature of curriculum development in Vietnam is centrally decided by the Ministry of Education and Training. At the primary and secondary education levels, curricular arrangements in all schools have to follow the official "Curriculum Guidelines" (for primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary) which specifically mandate teaching hours, methods, goals, textbooks and objectives of each subject taught in school.

For junior high schools, the "Curriculum guidelines" sets the following as the primary goal for learning the subject of Vietnamese language: to guide students to continue their studies from primary schools, to enhance their life experiences, to cultivate the concept of Vietnamese ethics, to inspire patriotism, and to promote Vietnamese culture (Ministry of Education & Training, 1995b, p. 30). There is no doubt that

cultivating patriotism and preserving traditional ethics among youngsters are two of the major functions of schooling in Vietnam. This aspect of curriculum development seems to support the argument of social capital in the formation of norms and networks between schools, families and communities, as well as between students, teachers and parents.

The other side of the centralized curriculum in Vietnam, however, shows several major constraints. With a strong education system serving 20 million people and more than half a million teachers (MOET, 2000) at general educational levels, schools follow a strictly centralized curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education and Training. In general education systems, schools throughout the country use the same set of textbooks and teaching guidelines, and the curriculum serves mainly to prepare students for National University Entrance Exams, which includes little practical content. Learning is textbook-centered and school activities are geared toward sending a high ratio of students into upper secondary and tertiary educational levels. According to a UNDP report (1998, p. 87), the main pedagogical approach in primary and secondary schools involves memorization to “equip pupils to take national exams, with usually little or no in-class discussion or space to express ideas.”

There has been much criticism of content and methodology at all levels. The highly centralized control over education has produced numerous problems. The centralized curriculum shows several key weaknesses: First, it requires students to learn many subjects. For example, primary schools have to offer 6 subjects, including moral and ethical education; Vietnamese language, math, and science and secondary schools have to offer twelve subjects of study (data from MOET, 1995b, pp. 46-49). Second, time allocation places too much emphasis on learning the main academic subjects such as

math, language and science, and too little attention has been given to other subjects such as art, music, sports and extracurricular activities, which are often replaced by academics. Third, the curriculum gives too little flexibility to local schools. Nguyen (1999, p.1) makes an important point when he indicates that the rigid curriculum does not take account of regional differences and that it appears too costly to many poor students who are being taught material that is not relevant to their daily struggle for existence.

Recently, calls to pay attention to the all-round development of children and to allow adjustment for regional and local variation are heard. Many localities request that the Ministry of Education provide "One general outline and multiple sets of textbooks." This suggestion will allow the government to maintain macro control but also takes into consideration the needs of local economic and social development, as well as the educational level of local students. There remain many other critical issues related to curriculum and material development; consequently, a need for a critical analysis of the current curriculum, textbooks and teaching guides has arisen. From my point of view, it is important to emphasize curricula which focus on analytical skills, a capacity for creative thought, and aptitudes and life skills more relevant to human resources requirements for the on-going renovation process in Vietnam.

To continue the *doi moi* process that Vietnam has launched vigorously over the last decade, the Vietnamese education sector faces many challenges, such as the expansion of educational access to ethnic minority groups and isolated areas, improving educational quality, and supplying an adequately skilled labor force for an emerging market economy. Obviously, Vietnam needs to supply skilled people for the modern sector; however, this sector has just been built up in last several years, and it is still

considered too new to support large-scale employment. Two thirds of the Vietnamese population are living in rural areas and relying mainly on agriculture, forestry, and handicrafts. Education and employment needs are critical for youth and adults in these areas too. Formal education and non-formal education are required to meet the educational needs of youth and adults. While formal education may lead students to get different kinds of degrees and it may help satisfy the needs of the modern sector, non-formal education plays a significant role in affecting changes in social structures and social relations. I agree with David R. Evans' notion that an effective national educational system should be "a mixture of in-school and out-of school educational processes." (1981, p. 11). In this sense, non-formal education may contribute to the non-modern sector in the Vietnamese society.

There are emerging issues for the education sector in Vietnam during the transition period to a market economy. For instance, what are the underlying values of the curriculum guidelines, and do they agree with the prevailing values of the society? How can curriculum guidelines, textbooks and teaching methods be improved in order to meet the needs of both the modern sector and the non-modern sector? How can non-formal education be changed to meet learning needs and practical skills for youths and adults? How can educators and teachers in Vietnam transform their teaching methods during the *doi moi* process? These questions are critical; however, there are still no studies available on these important issues.

#### **3.5.4 Children's labor**

Child labor is particularly widespread in rural areas. A range of studies (Theis 1997; Duong, 1997) have shown that even small children in Viet Nam undertake work



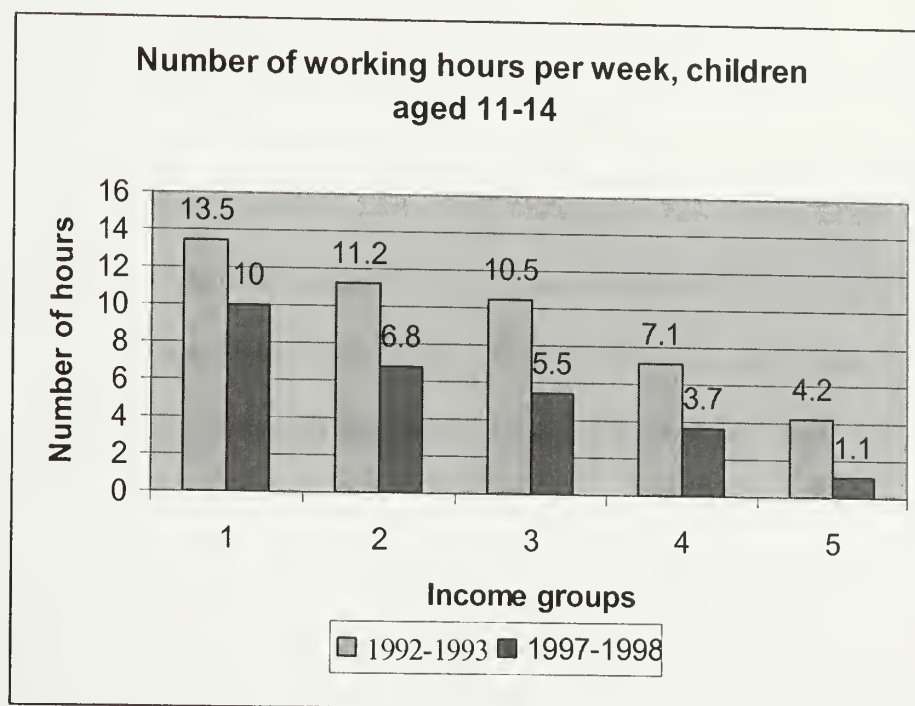
that has economic value, whether productive work in the fields or in household tasks. In rural areas of Viet Nam, children start to work as early as five or six. Children typically help clean and guard the house, fetch water, wood and animal fodder, care for young siblings and tend livestock. As they get older, they take on more tasks outside the home, while the girls typically work longer hours in the home than boys. According to the 1993-1994 Vietnam Living Standard Survey (VLSS), in 1993 children under the age of 12 years accounted for 6 percent of the labor force in Viet Nam, and those under 15 years accounted for 15 percent (VLSS, 1994). Research of 1997- SCF in the Thach Thanh district (Thanh Hoa province) and Cam Xuyen district (Ha Tinh province) found that in a typical family of two adults and three teenage children, 30-40 percent of all household labor was done by children. As general household chores are unpaid labor, children's work can allow parents to concentrate on money-earning work (Theist, SCF, 1997)

Research in Thanh Chau district (Son La province) reveals that many household chores left children, especially girls, no time for schoolwork when a choice needed to be made between school work and family obligation. Girl children are expected to take on more responsibilities around the house and in preparation for marriage (Duong, 1997)

Children working in rural areas are likely to be exposed to many kinds of hazards and are prone to many sources of accidents such as wounds from hoes and machetes, broken bones from falling while collecting firewood, drowning while tending buffaloes, burns while cooking, and traffic accidents while carrying loads along highways. Often the treatment is inadequate or unavailable, which leads to permanent injuries. Heavy work can stunt or distort the physical development of teenagers. Rural children are often in contact with dangerous substances such as fertilizers and insecticides while working on

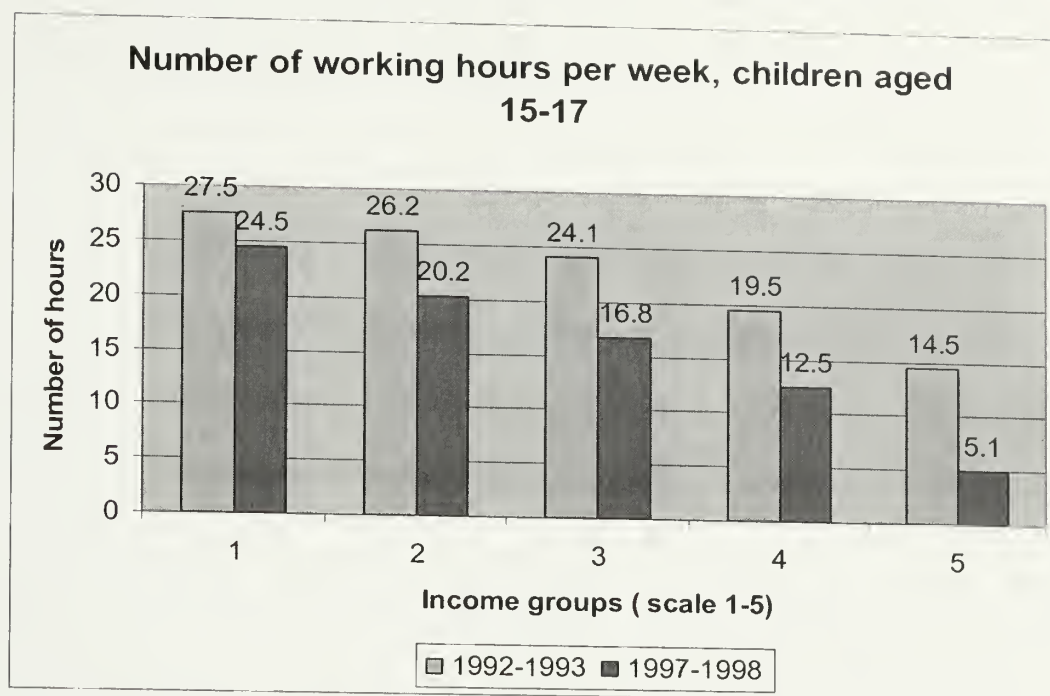
the farms or in rice fields (UNDP, 1998). The number of hours children spend on working in the household is often long. The figure 4 and 5 provides the number of working hours per week for children aged 11 to 14 and for teenagers aged from 15 to 17 (Data source was taken from the two Viet Nam Living Standard Surveys in 1992-1993 and 1997-1998).

**Figure 4. Number of working hours per week, children aged 11-14**



Source: VLSS 1992-1993 and VLSS 1997-1998

Figure 5. Number of working hours per week, children aged 15-17



Source: VLSS 1992-1993 and VLSS 1997-1998

Child Labor in Viet Nam is related to a number of interconnected factors that affect the educational attainment of children. Although children helping parents with household chores is an accepted and long-standing tradition in Vietnamese families, it becomes more critical if work outside the household is heavy, long and exposes the child to hazards.

### 3.5.5 Parent Involvement in Schooling

In Vietnamese society, parent involvement benefits not only children but parents, teachers and schools as well. There is a saying in Viet Nam, “Parents are the child’s first teacher.” The traditional teaching profession is one of the most respected positions in society. Vietnamese educators are aware that families are important in the education of children. Like many other developing countries, it is standard for schools in Vietnam to

have Parents' Associations (PA- *Hoi Cha Me Hoc sinh*). The PA plays an important role by mobilizing other parents to register their children in school. However, the extent of the PA is just limited to certain areas, such as the collection of fees and charges from the students. The 1998 UNICEF report indicates that parent involvement in school activities appears to be very limited. Parents with limited education levels may not be able to follow their children's lessons, and they feel that their educations have little to offer their children in their school work. Rural parents do not have enough time to get involved because of their time constraints (UNICEF, 1998, p. 21). This issue will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

### **Conclusion**

The common motive of many Vietnamese people during the *doi moi* process has been how to get rich "first of all", i.e., a preoccupation with economic wealth. This motive is quite understandable because the Vietnamese people sustained a long struggle for national development, especially for economic growth. It is very clear that education is one element of the overall manpower policies in Vietnam and one of the instruments for a successful *doi moi* process. In examining the influence of *doi moi* on educational development in Viet Nam, several issues seem contradictory and resist simple explanation. This can be seen in curriculum development, educational material development, and the level of participation of families and communities in the educational processes within school settings.

The Vietnamese educational system presents several macro indicators related to the expansion of basic education nationwide, such as universal primary education and literacy. However, the gap between rural and urban areas is wider in terms of inequality,

rising costs, relevance of education in curriculum development, and child labor. Parent involvement in school was considered part of a long tradition of Viet Nam's love and respect of learning. However, parent involvement during the *doi moi* period and the connection between school and families can contribute to reduce the distance between formal education and the familiar home life of the students

The remaining chapters of this dissertation systematically examine the processes by which various factors determine such differences in educational attainment. First, Chapter Four discusses the data sources and methods used in this analysis. The details of the household's survey of educational participation that I conducted in Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc province, are outlined here. Then, using a variety of quantitative analyses and in-depth interviews, Chapters Five and Chapter Six test the hypothesized relationship between family-based / community-based social capital and educational attainment, then discuss the research results.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODS, DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with research methods, data collection and the measurements of variables used to investigate the research questions outlined in previous chapters. Given the fact that there have been a number of empirical studies in North America on social capital and educational attainment, and that very few studies on this topic are available in developing countries, I employ an empirical analysis in my study. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used to explain the links between family, community-based social capital and educational attainment in Vietnam. In this chapter, I first discuss the research methods I devised for this study. Second, data sources, survey instruments, survey site selections and a general description of survey sites are included. In the last section, I present my measurements of the variables of social capital within the family, community and school. The preliminary data analysis also concludes this chapter. An outline of this chapter is provided in Table 10 as follows:

**Table 10: Outline of Research Methods and Household Survey**

Descriptions	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
Primary data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Household survey</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In-depth Interviews</li><li>• Focus Group Interviews</li><li>• A case Study Approach</li></ul>
Secondary Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data sources</li><li>• Provincial, district and commune secondary data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• profile of Vinh Phuc Province</li></ul>
The survey in Me Linh district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One-week training workshop for 12 teacher-researchers and 6 principal</li><li>• Questionnaire format</li><li>• Sampling procedure</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Survey site selection</li><li>• Me Linh district context</li><li>• In-depth case studies in six communes: Hoang Kim, Nam Viem, Ngoc Thanh, Phuc Yen, Quang Minh and Tien Chau</li></ul>
Organization of the Preliminary Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Measurement of Variables:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Independent Variables</li><li>- Dependent Variables</li><li>- Methods</li></ul></li></ul>	

## **4.1 Research methods**

The researcher has sought to discover how much the educational attainment of students at junior secondary schools is related to the quality of social capital available at home, community and school. These key factors form a primary foundation for student outcomes. Since this research is empirically designated, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used.

### **4.1.1 Qualitative Research Methods**

Qualitative research, according to Marshal and Rossman (1999, p. 2), is “pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the lived experiences of people.” Moreover, its analysis can illustrate why a policy is successful or unsuccessful. In addition, Cheng (1996) suggests that qualitative research is very important for policy-related research in developing countries. He argues that in policy decisions, solutions to a problem are available when the causes of the problem are identified and understood. The local culture is also a factor that the researcher needs to take into account while conducting field research. Furthermore, qualitative methods help explain the process of policy formation and implementation.

For this research study, qualitative methods, specifically field observation and open-ended interviews, were used to develop a more nuanced understanding of the educational process and the factors associated with educational attainment in the case study sites. The concept of social capital has emerged as an important concept for understanding educational attainment, but the static measurement of social capital used in most studies has provided little understanding of the dynamic process through which social capital is mobilized to enhance educational access and quality. As I mentioned in

Chapter Two, social capital is manifested by both structure and process. Certain structural measures, such as family structure, number of siblings and the number of persons active in civic organizations, serve as indicators of social capital, and their effect can be measured in quantitative models. However, social capital is only mobilized through actual processes of social interaction. Qualitative methods such as field observation and open-ended interviews are necessary to more fully understand how networks, norm, trust, and commitments constitute a social resource.

#### **4.1.2 Quantitative Research Methods**

Quantitative methods are key to this research. These are employed to examine the relationships between community social capital, parent involvement, and students' educational attainment. Based on responses to survey questionnaires a statistical analysis consisting of a step-by-step process was used with frequencies, cross tabulations, and with several models for testing. Then, armed with data from a number of households and schools in distinct, surveyed communes, several statistical procedures were employed to examine the dimensions of community-based social capital, family characteristics, and school environment. These model included pair wise coefficient correlations, Chi squares and cross tabulations, a factor analysis, a logistic regression and analysis of variances (three-way ANOVA) to explore differences of variables in the relationships with educational attainment. These dimensions are considered as factors and possible determinants in two aspects of educational attainment: school attendance and academic achievement through using GPA scores. The expected results from the statistical testing provide various explanations of the differences in educational attainment among students.

#### 4.1.3 A Case Study Approach

In regard to the merit of the case study, as indicated by Merriam (1988) and Yin (1989) (cited by Creswell, 1994, p.12), the researcher can “explore a single entity or phenomenon bounded by time and activity and collect detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time.” Marshall & Rossman (1999, p. 61) consider that "a case study, the most complex strategy, may entail multiple methods -- interviews, observations, document analysis, even surveys." They indicate that a case study could have an array of methods ranging from in-depth interviews to analyses of documented materials. Kane (1995, p. 176) also states that case studies use almost all the research techniques in the social scientist's tool kit. The case study approach is particularly useful because it provides insights into how and why something works in real life. Patton indicates that case studies are applicable "where one needs to understand some particular problem and situation in greater depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information -- rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question" (Patton, 1987, p.19).

For this research, a case study approach was reasonable because the lack of resources and time made it to do a nationwide survey. The advantage of the case study lies in the ability to deal with a full variety of documents, sample surveys, interviews etc. These perspectives allow a researcher to limit research to the commune level in Vietnam. Guided by the principles of a case study, the researcher can select a sample of communes that vary in economic and educational development. Based on expected results from the sample data, the researcher can conduct in-depth studies on community social capital with interviews of substantial length and broad range.

## **4.2 Data Collection**

### **4.2.1 Data Sources**

To address my research questions, I collected data that illuminated both substantive and theoretical perspectives. As I explained above, my theoretical framework of educational attainment in Vietnam emphasizes family-based and community-based social capital as important determinants of students' attainment. A great deal of data on the school environment was collected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the educational process in Viet Nam.

In fact, during my graduate studies at American universities, I often came back to Vietnam either to serve as a consultant for UNICEF and Oxfam, or to participate in training programs for educators. In 1997, I conducted a field survey in the Son La province on girls' work and education; I was also able to conduct a small-scale survey in several communes in the Thanh Chau district of Son La province, a northern upland in Vietnam. My analytical report on girls' work and education for UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam was often cited among UN Publications. When I returned to Vietnam in 1999, I helped Sapa's Education Department in Lao Cai province (with support from Oxfam) to conduct a series of trainings on community development and the expansion of educational opportunities for ethnic children. I introduced a participatory approach which teachers welcomed, for they saw it as a valuable tool for their teaching methods. Moreover, at each field research site in Vietnam, I consulted sources from the Ministry of Education and Training, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and NGOs in Vietnam in order to compile national, provincial and district-level statistics.



While national-, provincial-, and district-level data regarding education are available in Vietnam, there are no sources of community and family-level data of the type I needed to explore my hypotheses about family-based and community-based social capital and educational attainment. Therefore, I quickly realized the need to collect my own primary data in the form of household surveys. In the summer of 2001, I returned to Vietnam and conducted household surveys and in-depth interviews. This decision brought with it both great advantages and serious frustrations. An obvious advantage of conducting my own survey was that I had the freedom to ask questions which specially addressed my theoretical concerns. As a result, I was able to produce a survey that provides a wealth of detailed information on family structure, household resources, parent attitudes, cultural beliefs, and children's school experiences. One frustration, however, was that I had a limited time frame and budget. As a result, I had to make hard choices on how to best utilize the field work period. I discuss some of these hard choices in detail below.

In addition to the household survey, I conducted 18 individual interviews with teachers, parents, community members and students in each survey area and 6 focus group interviews in the six surveyed communes. The interviews were conducted in the Vietnamese-language. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in order to ensure an accurate account of the responses. In addition, interview notes were taken using the guiding interview questions, but the researcher didn't rigidly follow the questions prepared in advance. In many cases, the direction of interviews and the questions were adjusted according to the interest and knowledge of the interviewees. These interviews provide rich descriptive detail to supplement the survey data. The

interviews allowed me to delve more deeply into issues that were left unclear in the survey. Through these interviews and discussions I also gained a better understanding of the educational issues that emerged in rural areas during the *doi moi* process and post-*doi moi* times. The following sections outline the procedures I used -- how I selected the survey sights, my secondary statistics, and the household survey I devised in the field research.

#### **4.2.2 National, Provincial and District-Level Secondary Data**

In Ha Noi and in the Vinh Phuc province, I collected the most recent national- and district-level secondary data on population and education. The major source for educational data comes from UNDP, the Ministry of Education & Training and the Vinh Phuc Education & Training Office. The data includes important social indicators of population and general education in Vinh Phuc: for instance, population statistics in Vinh Phuc, age- and gender specific population counts, the percent of population that is literate (by gender and age group), and the ethnic composition of the population in the province. Regarding educational data, I collected information on the number of schools in the province, the number of males and females enrolled in junior and senior secondary schools, and the completion rate at secondary schools. From such collected data, the general educational context in Vinh Phuc province can be generally understood. District-level development and education indicators include the population by gender and ethnicity, agricultural potential, literacy rates, enrollment in primary and secondary educational levels and the qualifications of teachers. Obviously, districts vary greatly in terms of the availability of schools, enrollment rates, gender and ethnic differences in participation and completion. For this research, I mainly focus on rural districts where

ethnic groups are mixed together with the Vietnamese majority. Thus, consideration of the connections between different ethnic groups in rural areas guided my selection of the survey sites.

### **4.3 The Survey**

#### **4.3.1 Instruments and Interview Guides for the Survey**

I designed the survey to answer a wide range of questions regarding family- and community-level resources that are related to the educational attainment of children at junior secondary schools in the Me Linh district of the Vinh Phuc province. A number of questionnaires were administered with 82 scaling questions. The questionnaire set includes 59 questions for adults and 22 questions for children aged from 10 to 18 years. I was inspired by information on social capital research that I learned from the literature, and adapted key information to the context of Vietnam. Several research instruments were adapted from the research studies made by Beaulieu and Israel (2001,1997). Several methodological guides were drawn from a series of studies made by Narayan and Prichetts (2001, 1997) in *Voices of the Poor: Poverty and Social Capital in Tanzania*. During the field research in Viet Nam, several faculty members at the Hanoi Teacher Training University, along with teachers from local schools in the Me Linh district, made significant contributions to the modifications of interview guides and questionnaire sets to reflect the Vietnamese context. Copies of questionnaires in English may be found in Appendix 1.

The household instrument consists of questionnaires for parents and their school-aged children. The responses of children and parents are considered as indicators of family-based and community social capital because they tap various aspects of the

networks, norms, trust and cultural patterns among parents, children and community members. They do not provide a direct measure of social capital, but by tapping the level of student and parent involvement in the school, as well as students' perceptions of the school, they hopefully provide a suitable proxy for social capital. Parents have various levels of physical capital, human capital and social capital to invest in their children. Family social capital can be measured through a process of interaction between children and parents at home. Such interaction can be seen through processes of parent-child discussion, parent-teacher association, volunteering, supporting, and communicating with other parents.

The survey contains questions regarding structure and process attributes at the family and community levels. For example, the questions ask about family structure, household income and assets, parents' educational level, parent's aspirations and expectations for children, parent-child discussion, and parental involvement in the community and in school programs. One section contained questions about the school experiences for each child between the ages of 10 and 18 in the household. One section focused on data for the household and on the parents. This data comprises the independent variables and dependent variables in the statistical analysis of educational participation and completion.

#### **4.3.2 Data on Children**

Educational information was collected for each child aged 10-18 within the household. I chose children aged 10-18 since this age-range represents the age group in later primary school through secondary school. In order to keep the length of the survey

manageable for both interviewer and respondent, I decided not to gather data on children in their earliest years of school.

For each child currently enrolled in school, I collected the following data: age, sex, current grade point average from their last school, the school's distance from home, mode of transport to school, reasons for and length of most recent absence, tutoring needs, household chores, the amount of help with homework at home, expectations for future jobs, and academic performance.

#### **4.3.3 Household and Family Background Data**

In addition to questions on the educational experience of each school-age child, the survey contained questions regarding family- and community-based social capital in two aspects: structural and process attributes. In terms of structural family-based social capital, questions included family structure, household income and assets, and parents' backgrounds. In terms of process attributes of family-social capital, questions covered a wide range of topics, from parents' aspirations and expectations for their children, cultural attitudes and opinions about education, to parents' interaction with their children. Questions about supervising and helping children with their homework were also included. Questions on tutoring needs were posed to explore the trend of shadow education in the rural areas.

Questions on community-based social capital were also integrated into the household survey questionnaires. This instrument aimed to solicit information on the following: what are the associations and groups at the commune level? How do associations function at the commune level? Is there any sign of declining trust in communes? What are the values and cultural norms that are shared amongst people in the



communes? The purpose of these questions was to obtain information describing some dimensions and resources that are used to construct community-based social capital.

#### **4.3.4 Selection of survey sites**

Conducting a survey in a developing country like Vietnam offers challenges. Few households have telephones and mail is unreliable. This fact eliminates the possibility of mail or telephone surveys. Face to face interviewing was the only way to gather the detailed information I needed to examine the relationships between family- and community-based social capital on the one hand and educational attainment on the other. Of course, interviewing is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, and in order to obtain a large enough sample with which to conduct statistical analyses (about 360 households), I needed assistance. Local teachers were the best source to help me in this endeavor. I decided to hire a team of 12 teachers in the survey district (two teachers from each surveyed commune) to serve as research assistants for the duration of the survey. In addition, I asked the principals of local schools to get involved in the survey. Because of their significant roles within the commune, principals could help in contacting local leaders and obtaining lists of households in each commune. Two research-teachers and the principal set up a team in each commune. This strategy enabled me to have one group of research assistants for the entire survey period, which paid off. The result was a very carefully conducted survey that only dedicated, well-trained interviewers could achieve. The necessity of conducting face-to-face interviews also had important implications for the selection of the survey sites. Due to the limitations of time and budget constraints, I could not conduct interviews in many rural districts of Vietnam.

Instead, I decided to conduct interviews in a rural district where there was a diversity of population in terms of ethnicity, living situation, and experience with education.

Since it is impossible to survey all ethnic groups in Vietnam, I selected Vinh Phuc province, one of the provinces located in middle northern upland, which Kinh, Muong, Dao, San Chay and San Diu ethnic groups inhabit together. Vietnam in 2001 consists of 10 regions and 61 provinces (UNDP, 2001, p. 3). Provinces are divided into districts, towns, and capitals. Provincial districts are divided into communes and townships; provincial towns and provincial capitals are divided into wards and villages. Each administrative level has a people's council and a people's committee. Different tiers of People's Committees (local government) have responsibilities for daily administration at the provincial, city, district, and commune level.

The people's councils represent the local authority of the state and are the top supervisory bodies at each level. They do not govern directly but instead elect and oversee people's committees that act as executive bodies and carry out local administrative duties. Council members are popularly elected-- although candidates are screened by the party--and are responsible for ensuring strict local observance of the Constitution and laws and for ruling on local plans and budgets. Council members are further charged with overseeing the development and maintenance of local armed forces units. Since the *doi moi* process, the districts became the basic administrative units of the government. The Commune is the last administrative structure at the local level in Vietnam. Commune is called as *xa* in Vietnamese. The administrative structure of a commune consists of the chairman, vice-chairman and standing members of the commune's committee

Geographic, demographic, economic, social and cultural factors have all played integral parts in shaping the Vinh Phuc societal context behind its education system.

Vinh Phuc, a midland province, is located north east of Ha Noi, the capital of Viet Nam. The total land area covers approximately 1, 370.73 square kilometers and has a population of 1,091,981. While Kinh people are a majority group in Vinh Phuc and in general, Muong, Dao, San Chay and San Diu people are distinctive ethnic groups in Vinh Phuc, comprising 2.7 percent of the population there ( *Lich su tinh Vinh Phuc, 2000*). Vinh Phuc is considered a “bridge province” between the capital Ha Noi and the northern mountainous provinces. At this important location, Vinh Phuc has the potential to develop agricultural and industrial sectors affiliated with the central system, and to utilize the natural and human resources of the central system as well.

The 2001 UNDP Report ranks Vinh Phuc as 17<sup>th</sup> out of 61 provinces in the whole of Viet Nam. This means that Vinh Phuc is a middle-level province in terms of human development indicators. See Table 11 on the Human Development Index of Vinh Phuc in 2001 as ranked by UNDP.

**Table 11      Human Development Index of Vinh Phuc in 2001 in relation to the rest of Vietnam**

	Vinh Phuc	Vietnam
Total population, 1999	1,091,981	66, 223,000
Female population share	51.3	50.8
GDP per capita in PPP (\$US)	1040	1,860
GDP per capita (\$US), 1998	193	304.69
Population below income poverty line (%-1999)	11.42	13.21
Life expectancy at birth, 1999	72.2	70.9
Labor (as % of total population, 1998)	49.1	48.6
Local labor (as% of total labor force, 1998)	1.45	100.00
Unskilled labor (%-1998)	92.1	89.2
Adult Literacy rate (%), 1999	94.0	90.3
Net Primary Enrolment rate	92.8	88.5
Net secondary enrollment rate	59.0	46.9
Net high school enrollment rate	33.7	27.3
People having a university graduate and postgraduate (per 100 000 people 1999)	670	1265
Tertiary enrollment rate (per 100,000 people, 1999)	127	153

Source: UNDP, 2001, p. 60

**Figure 6 Map of Viet Nam.**



**Figure 7 Map of Vinh Phuc Province**





Since San Diu people are located in Me Linh, and since they share several similarities with other ethnic groups, such as the Muong, San Chay, H'mong, Tay, and Thai peoples, I chose Me Linh as a district for this survey. According to the 1998 - Population Statistic Book, the San Diu population with a total of 94 630 people's ranks sixteenth among 53 minority groups in Vietnam. A description of the major educational indicators of the Me Linh district is provided in the section below.

My choice of survey sites was driven by a concern to capture some of the wide variations across regions in terms of school attendance and educational attainment rates. For the district and commune representatives, I had some practical considerations for my selection of survey sites. Given the interview format of the survey, the areas had to be accessible by public transportation and not so sparsely populated that my research assistants and I would spend more time walking between houses than interviewing. Getting permission from different administrative levels is necessary for this kind of survey.

The educational system in Vietnam is organized from the top down. This means that the educational administration at the lower level is analogous, to a large extent, to that of the national level. Such a structure made the researcher ask permission to conduct doctoral research from the Ministry of Education and Training to the Vinh Phuc province and from the provincial level to Me Linh district. Once I obtained all the necessary permissions, I conducted the survey in Me Linh without any hurdles from local authorities. In fact, I got strong support from local authorities as well as from school teachers and community members. Without their generous assistance, my field research

could not yield good, sound findings (see Appendix 4 for the introduction letter of the Chair of my Dissertation Committee and letters from the Ministry of Education and Training in Viet Nam and the People Committee in Me Linh district for the survey).

A summary of my considerations for the selection of the district and six communes is detailed as follows. Communes vary greatly in terms of the availability of schools, enrollment rates, ethnic groups, and gender difference. Table 12 below describes the strategy for data sampling and interview guides.

**Table 12      Sampling Strategies and Interview Guides**

Sampling Strategies	<u>In-depth Interview Process</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Selection of 6 communes in Me Linh district based on geographical, cultural and ethnic aspects.</li> <li>■ 60 households/communes x 6 communes = 360 households</li> <li>■ One week training workshop for 12 teacher-researchers and 6 principals from 6 communes</li> <li>■ Visit households with school-age children.</li> <li>■ Questionnaire formats: 82 scaling questions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the purpose and procedures</li> <li>• Consistent with question checklist</li> <li>• Revisit households if respondents are not available</li> <li>• 360 adults (head of household or spouse) and 360 children aged 10-18 years old filled survey questionnaires.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conduct 6 Focus Group Interviews in 6 communes</li> <li>■ Conduct 18 individual Interviews in 6 communes</li> <li>■ Tape recording if permitted</li> <li>■ Note Taking</li> <li>■ Transcribe and translate interpretive data</li> </ul>

#### **4.4 The Survey in Me Linh District**

The sampling strategy for this survey was to select 6 communes in the Me Linh district of Vinh Phuc province: two communes with high socio- economic status, two communes ranking at the middle level, communes having low income levels. Working together with Me Linh's educational officials, I chose six communes in Me Linh: Hoang Kim, Nam Vien, Ngoc Thanh, Phuc Yen, Quang Minh, and Tien Chau. Six communes in the Me Linh district of Vinh Phuc province captured a range of geographical, cultural and ethnic differences. Combined, the variety among these communes I hypothesized to be most significant in determining differences in educational attainment: they possess a variety within their rural and township characteristics, in their ethnic and cultural make-up, and the availability and quality of their educational facilities.

Sixty households in each commune were interviewed with the questionnaire format. Households with school-age children were visited. In order to avoid fatigue in respondents and researchers, a strategy to gain the trust of respondents was needed. Descriptive information about the survey sites shows the current socio-economic situation in Me Linh and the six communes in the survey.

##### **4.4.1 Site-Sampling Procedures and the Survey Sites**

In June 2001, I conducted a one-week training for the research team of the six communes in Phuc Yen town. Not only were twelve teachers involved as research assistants but six principals from six communes also contributed in a substantial way to the improvement of the research methods I used during this time. I presented the survey's purposes and methods and shared ideas with teacher-research assistants. We evaluated the questionnaires and made the necessary changes to the survey's wording and

format. This training was especially important given the level of the questionnaires and the importance of collecting data for all the questions. The following sections provide detailed, descriptive information about the survey sites as well as about the specific sampling strategies that were used in this survey.



The Training Workshop in Me Linh district- June 2001

Our sampling strategy in all six communes was relatively straightforward. With the help of local authorities in each commune, houses in each hamlet were numbered. Each research teacher interviewed thirty households. The research assistants visited the randomly selected households and if the household had children ages 10-18, the research assistants interviewed either the parents or the guardians of the households. Households that did not have school-age children were discarded from the sample and replaced with other randomly-selected households.

The research assistant carried a photocopy of a letter from the Ministry of Education and Training, a letter of introduction, and a letter from the Chairman of the People's Committee of the Me Linh district. The items were presented to the household

at the door to inform them of the purpose of the survey (See Appendices). This procedure helped establish rapport with our respondents and resulted in the full support of families to take part in the survey. Finally, every effort was made to interview each randomly-selected household. If no adult was present at home for the first visit, the interviewer returned twice before dropping that household from the sample. In many cases, the interviewers made an appointment in the evening or on the week-end. The result of these efforts from the research team was that all 360 households filled in the sets of questionnaires, even though several questions were missing. In total, the survey received responses from 360 households (husband or wife) and 360 children from ages 10 to 18.

Since the sampling procedure varied slightly in each area, the following sections provide detailed descriptive information about the survey sites that we used in six communes.

#### **4.4.2 Me Linh District in Vinh Phuc Province: a District Context**

Me Linh district, located to the southeast of Vinh Phuc province, is land-locked and contains lowland, midland, and mountainous communes. Me Linh has a mixture of urban and rural areas, with a total land area of 23, 648.87 ha and a population of 248, 002 (History of Me Linh, 1999). Among 116,000 working-age people, there are 99,700 who are classified as part of the rural labor force, while 16, 000 are counted as part of the urban labor force. Me Linh District is composed of 22 communes and two towns (Phuc Yen and Xuan Hoa). Ngoc Thanh is a mountainous commune in Me Linh and is populated predominantly by people of the San Diu ethnic minority.



In the past, the people in Me Linh district were engaged primarily in farm work and in various activities including small industries, handicrafts, and other services. Because of the *doi moi* process, Me Linh's economy has been growing over the last decade. Economic opportunities vary considerably from commune to commune, depending on environmental and geographical conditions and on proximity to the market. A number of agencies and institutions were set up in Me Linh. Ten industrial state-owned enterprises and seven foreign-owned companies are located on Me Linh land areas. Recently, the government has approved the construction of the Kim Hoa industrial zone in Me Linh. Although several new industrial enterprises exist in Me Linh, rice production, forestry and animal husbandry form the main sources of livelihood. The implementation of 10- contracted land reform<sup>6</sup>, which brought the incentive system to farmers, brought many changes. For instance, rice yields have shown positive trends, although with ups and downs. These achievements, coupled with an increase in the nominal price of paddy and the fluctuation in the real price of paddy around a constant trend, has resulted in considerable improvement in the lives of people in the district. See Table 13 describes about Basic Educational Indicators in Me Linh.

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<sup>6</sup> The implementation of 10-contracted land reform was addressed by the legislation, in particular the first land law of 1987, in which land was actually allocated to users, including organizations and individual households, for a period of three to five years ( UNDP, 1996, p, 38)

**Table 13: Basic Educational Indicators in Me Linh district**

	Schools	Class	Students	Minority Students	Teachers	Principals & deputies	Enrollment rate
<b>Primary Education</b>	37	911	27 385	508	1040	87	98%
<b>Lower secondary</b>	25	565	22 945	425	980	49	98.2%
<b>Upper Secondary</b>	5 public & 3 people-founded schools	192	9 834	195	225	Na	Na

Overall, positive changes have been confirmed by analyses of the household surveys conducted in six communes in the district: A description of the general economic-social situation of each village is provided below (Table 14)

**Table 14: Basic Statistics of Research Sites**

Commune	Hoang Kim	Nam Viem	Ngoc Thanh	Phuc Yen	Quang Minh	Tien Chau
<b>Location</b>	<b>Lowland</b>	<b>Lowland</b>	<b>Mountainous</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Lowland</b>	<b>Midland</b>
<b>Number of hamlet</b>	5	6	7	6	11	8
<b>Population</b>	8,412	8,812	7,813	10,056	9, 812	8, 515
<b>Households</b>	1,379	1,421	1,302	1,596	1,592	1,373
<b>Average Household size</b>	6	6	6.	6	6.	6
<b>Children from 10-18 years</b>	500	596	612	725	711	697
<b>San Diu</b>			x			
<b>Kinh</b>	X	x	x	X	X	x
<b>Primary school classes</b>	22	25	21	30	46	26
<b>Junior secondary classes</b>	11	16	13	25	37	18

### **Hoang Kim Commune**

Hoang Kim commune consists of three hamlets which stretch down the Red-River dam. The commune faces unfavorable economic conditions. The commune's naturally cultivated land areas have often been destroyed by the rise and fall of water levels in the Red River. Irrigation water from the river is insufficiently controlled, and frequent floods and droughts affect yields in each year. The commune has suffered from annual floods caused by the water flow. Ninety percent of households in Hoang Kim commune live with the annual threat of floods over a 3- 5 month period each year. Rural infrastructure conditions are poor because of a lack of funds for maintenance and investment.

Economic development in Hoang Kim has generally lagged behind other communes in Me Linh. Most households engage in rice planting and husbandry. The low level of rice-crops leads to a low level of per capita income. Local people in Hoang Kim have been less successful in taking advantage of the economic opportunities of the *doi moi* process. The use of conventional farming methods and the lack of investment from business and government may be seen as factors behind this situation in Hoang Kim

### **Nam Viem Commune**

Nam Viem commune is a lowland commune with less fertile land. Rice cultivation is the main source of livelihood. Animal husbandry consists of raising pigs, buffalos, pigs and chicken. Because of the low yield from rice cultivation, a number of farmers in the commune began to shift to raising plan *dau* trees and silk worms to make natural silk. Local leaders sent several technicians to other provinces to learn techniques and skills in order to help farmers develop these new forms of production.

There are two hamlets where people practice Christian religion while the remaining three hamlets of the commune practice Buddhism.

In terms of educational facilities, Nam Viem middle school suffered from the drift of the soil, and all classrooms were destroyed and could not operate. The school had to evacuate to the elementary school facilities and to temporary houses from the commune. A new school is being built and will be completed by the end of this year.

### **Ngoc Thanh Commune**

Ngoc Thanh is a mountainous commune in Me Linh with a population of 10,000. More than half of these are San Diu ethnic people. Like many ethnic groups, the San Diu maintained their traditions. The San adopted the Kinh's wear; they worship their ancestors, the god of the kitchen, the genie of the earth and even the goddess of childbirth. Each year, they hold many ceremonies before planting and after harvest. The San Diu also worship Kwan Yin, Three Saints and their group founders.

The San Diu's traditional folksongs are rich. They usually sing alternating songs (*soong co*) in their cultural activities and at festivals. They possess a unique treasury of stories, particularly stories in verses. Dances are always performed at funerals. Musical instruments include horns, clarinets, drums, flutes, cymbals and castanets for religious ceremonies. Many games are much liked by the people, including walking on sticks, the game of sticks, San Diu style and tug-of-war.

Ngoc Thanh has a potential for tourism because it has a lake named Dai Lai. In the previous plan, when Dai Lai still belonged to the administrative management of Hanoi metropolitan capital, there was an extensive plan to develop Dai Lai into a tourist

center. Although this plan has not yet been realized, Ngoc Thanh still has the potential for tourist development.

Ngoc Thanh has a large area of forests and this is another condition for a fairly prosperous mountainous commune. Aside from rice, sweet potatoes, and corn, forest products constitute a significant source of income for the commune. Forest products include firewood, bamboo and timber. The school drop-out rate is 1.6 percent. Enrollment rates in senior secondary education are 65 percent in different types of schools, such as public secondary school, semi-public school, people-founded school and boarding school

### **Phuc Yen district town**

Phuc Yen town is the most “urban” of the survey sites and it is also the site of the district’s headquarters. In terms of its economy, Phuc Yen town is based primarily in services, small businesses and the household economy. Phuc Yen is influenced by urban life-styles and there has been a growing concern about cultural and moral issues.

In terms of educational facilities, Phuc Yen town has some of the best schools in the district. In the last three years, Phuc Yen middle school ranks among the best schools in Vinh Phuc. In the 2000-01 school year, Phuc Yen middle school was awarded the third degree medal from the Government.

### **Quang Minh commune**

Quang Minh has a population of 16,000. In addition to agriculture, the commune’s economy has expanded to include industrial enterprises. Since 1993, four state and private enterprises have invested in Quang Minh by building production facilities, such as Heineken-Beer Company, shoo-made company, Sao Kim Company and



Vit cap household appliances company. At the moment, the commune is being planned by the Vinh Phuc authorities as an industrial zone within its provincial territory. The houses in Quang Minh are built of cement or bricks, and have electricity and a well-water system. Many of the houses are surrounded by tree-fences.

Discussions with Quang Minh residents reveal that Quang Minh has a long-standing tradition of the love-learning attitude. From 1927, the first elementary school was established by the teacher Huong Su Tao. Currently, the educational system of Quang Minh includes pre- school to senior secondary levels. Within the commune, there is a pre-school with 22 classes, 2 primary education schools with 46 classes, one middle school with 37 classes and one semi-public upper secondary school with 8 classes.

According to the report of the principal of Quang Minh, the commune has 8 persons with doctorate degrees, 300 people with bachelor degrees, and hundreds of young children who have become students in universities and colleges throughout the country.

### **Tien Chau Commune**

Tien Chau commune is an adjacent commune and stretches along the Phuc Yen town. Despite being located on one of the major roads in the district, Tien Chau is distinctively rural. Houses range greatly in structure and size with the main distinction being between the temporary and permanent structures. Temporary structures are built of sheets and mud and covered with thatched roofs. Permanent structures are usually built with bricks and cement. These structural aspects of the housing are indicative of socio-economic status, as permanent structure represents the wealthiest households in the area. With 8515 households, local people engage in subsistence agriculture and livestock production. It is estimated that 85 percent of the population in Tien Chau derives its

livelihood from agriculture or livestock production. About 15 percent of the population is supported by small-scale and informal-sector activities including basket weaving, furniture making, wood carving and paper making. Most of these activities are performed by various women's group.

#### **4.5 Focus Group Interviews and Individual Interviews in survey communes**

In addition to conducting surveys, I organized 18 in-depth interviews with parents, principals, community leaders, teachers and students and six focus group interviews with representatives of organizations in all six surveyed communes. Personal interviews and focus group interviews were considered an appropriate means of gaining an in-depth understanding of the participants' views and opinions on given issues. The researcher had the opportunity to test the questions to make sure that participants understood them and so that there was good communication. As a research method, the interview conforms to the constructivist perspective in that the researcher and the interviewee have the freedom to express their views and perspectives on the issues at hand. In this study, the interviews were considered an appropriate means to become better informed on the participant's opinions and views of education.

The major objectives of the interviews were to provide an opportunity to probe the issues raised by the questionnaires and the hypotheses on which they were based. The researcher then conceived interview questions around three themes covered in the questionnaires. As we neared the end of the survey period, I consulted with the chairman of each commune and requested that he or she help in the in-depth interview process. Participants for these interviews were not randomly selected. They were community leaders and representatives of different organizations, such as women's groups, farmers'

groups, veteran groups, youth groups and other informal groups. I conducted six focus group interviews in 6 communes of the survey.

The focus group interviews sessions lasted between 1-2 hours. Participants were interviewed in Vietnamese. Depending on each commune, a suitable place was identified where the researcher could talk with interviewees, such as sitting rooms, playgrounds or classrooms.

The interviews and discussions with focus group provided an in-depth exploration of the issues covered in the survey, along with additional issues that the survey could not explicitly address. The discussions and interviews were also meant to gather more community-level information and to provide details on educational issues distinctive to each survey area. In this way, the individual and group interviews complemented the survey. The strategy for group discussions was to be able to get information on community recourses that seemed to be difficult to gather from the household survey. The discussions gained different opinions from people within the community on issues related to educational attainment.

With the help of school officials, I started each discussion with a list of questions and allowed plenty of time for people to respond with their answers and opinions. The specific questions focused on school support, fund raising and other community-level activities conducted to improve educational facilities, as well as on other educational-based organizations within the community such as parent-teacher associations. I asked about the level of activity in these organizations, parent's access to information about schools in their area, their perception of the functioning and performance of local schools, and their relationships with teachers. More generally, the discussions also

covered problems parents were having in educating their children, problems within the community and the country regarding education and employment, and possible ways of improving education or solving some of these problems.

Each entire session was tape recorded and the questions and answers transcribed at a later time. This process ensured that the researcher captured the respondent's answers accurately. I also provided plenty of time for mutual dialogs between the participants and the researchers. The researcher thanked the participants by making contributions to the local school at the end of the meeting.

Besides focus group interviews, I conducted individual interviews in households, in school and communities. There were 18 individual interviews ranging from heads or spouses of households to director of Education Department of Vinh Phuc Province. Through interviews and discussions, I was able to get information on the community's educational environment. The interviews and discussions were prepared with semi-structured questions and allowed time for people to respond with their answers and opinions. At the start of each interview, I informed participants that I was doing a survey in the area to learn about the children's schooling and the parent's feelings about education. I tried to put them at ease by talking about general subjects. All participants involved were very cooperative. I also expressed a desire to use a tape recorder on the interview. The interviewees were assured of confidentiality and were told that only the researcher could identify who they were. The interviewees were told that if they felt uncomfortable at any time, they could ask for the audio-tape to be turned off.

In short, qualitative interviews allowed for open-ended questions, which provided a better understanding of the motivations, processes, and strategies underlying social interaction.

#### **4.6 Preliminary Data Analysis**

The variety of data sources from the field research provided the researcher with a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data which I used to explain the complex set of factors shaping community-based social capital, family decision-making and educational attainment in contemporary Vietnam. As explained in Chapter Two, my theoretical framework starts with the premise that decision-making about education takes places within the family, but the range of available strategies are determined by institutional-level factors such as family-based and community-based social capital as determinants for educational attainment. Below is a preliminary data analysis and measurement of variables.

##### **4.6.1 Measurement of Variables**

The intangible quality of social capital makes it difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. Though the concepts of social capital and educational attainment are always broader than their measurements, researchers need to use certain methods to measure variables and to interpret them accordingly. It is important to note that the variables I selected for this study reflect Coleman's (1987, 1988) model of the three forms of social capital, namely the relationship between children and their parents, the relationship between siblings, and relationship with other family members such as know and discuss to parents of their children's friends .



Following Coleman, numerous studies in North America have employed similar measurements (Smith, 1993, Beaulieu & Israel, 1997; Israel, Beaulieu & Hartless, 2001). In regard to community-based social capital, I employed several of Putnam's methodologies to explore horizontal relationships and trust levels in rural areas of Viet Nam. For this study, social capital is measured using the household data collected during the field research in the 6 communes of Me Linh district.

#### **4.6.2 Independent Variables**

For this analysis, I used numerous factors to hypothesize the influences on children's educational attainment. To illuminate the whole picture of the educational environment, variables for family, community and individual are examined together with measurements of financial and human capital at the family level. Results on the frequencies, cross-tabulations, Chi-squares, coefficient correlations, factor analyses and analysis of variances are presented in tabular forms in the Chapter 5. In the following, the measurement of variables is discussed.

#### **Community-based Social Capital**

In order to investigate how community-based social capital is defined in the rural context of Viet Nam, I have used several indicators (to name a few such as membership in organizations, voting patterns, media usage) along the lines of the framework proposed by Putnam, such as trust and cooperation through associations and government institutions. According to Putnam (1993), a civic community is characterized by active participation in public affairs, horizontal relations of reciprocity, and bonds of solidarity and trust. Distinctive social structures and practices are characterized by thriving local associations. Numerous studies have followed the Putnam's approach in measuring the

degree of civic participation, for instance, the studies by Narayan and Pitched (1997, 1999) in Tanzania and a study by Sera (2001) in India. It was crucial for the present study to learn how community-based social capital is assessed in the rural areas of Me Linh district. As I mentioned above, 360 households were asked to gauge their level of trust, their associational activities, their kinship and their information channels, especially those in connection with education and school. In term of associational activity, every commune in Viet Nam has formal and informal organizations, groups and networks.

In Me Linh district, like all other districts in Viet Nam, formal organizations include the district people's committee (*uy ban nhan dan huyen*), the local commune authority (*uy ban nhan dan xa*), the cell of communist party, women's organizations, farmer's organizations, youth and veteran groups, schools, health clinics, hospitals, cooperatives, shops, temples, pagodas, churches and market places. Communes also have a range of informal groups and networks, including elder groups, artistic groups, sport groups and cultural groups. Indicators of community social capital is shown in the Table 15.

**Table 15: Indicators of community social capital**

Variables	Percentage %	Total number
Membership in Associations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's Group</li> <li>• Farmer's group</li> <li>• Veteran's Groups</li> <li>• More than one group</li> <li>• Other groups ( the Elder Group, The VAC's group...)</li> </ul>	23.1 22.5 4.7 20.3 22.5	359 (missing 1)
Functioning of the Associations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very good</li> <li>• Good</li> <li>• Average</li> <li>• Poor</li> <li>• Very poor</li> </ul>	41.5 32.2 19.0 0.3 0.6	357 (missing 3)
Clan influence learning and education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very Much</li> <li>• More</li> <li>• OK</li> <li>• Weak</li> <li>• Very Weak</li> </ul>	22.2 30.8 25.4 23.0 0.6	355 (missing 5)
Activities for schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising fund for school</li> <li>• Contribution in kind for school</li> <li>• Encourage children to school</li> <li>• Other activities</li> </ul>	33.7 6.5 50.1 1.7	353 (missing 7)
Contact local government Yes No	64.5 35.5	358 (missing 2)
Keep up-date on local, national and international news Yes No	91.0 9.0	356 (missing 4)

### **Family Social Capital**

In this study, family-social capital indicators include: (1) family structure; (2) number of siblings; (3) parent-child interaction; (4) parents help on homework; (5) parent-teacher conference; (5) volunteer contribution to school fund . These variable were generated from the literature and took into account contextual elements derived from the survey sites. For example the variable of clan and kinship in 6 communes. These

variables, in general, measure obligation, expectation and interaction between parents and their children.

For family structure, out of 360 households surveyed, only 22 (6.1 percent) persons claimed themselves as widows or single parents. As might be expected in developing countries, where the divorce rate is still low especially in rural areas, parents in 94 percent of student households (n= 338) were living together. To be specific, they reported having spouses and children. The household heads repeatedly voiced their belief that maintaining a stable family structure is crucial to family life. Many of them claimed that they had grandparents or other extended family members at home.

In regard to number of siblings, according to the response of households, siblings living in the home ranged from one to five or more. The mean score for number of sibling is 3.2 with standard deviation of 1. Concerning parent-child interaction, 323 students reported that their parents bought textbooks and school supplies, while 36 students (10 percent) claimed that they didn't have enough text-books nor necessary school supplies such as notebooks, pens, school bags etc. Many parents showed concerns about their children's bad grades, and about 55 percent of parents often talked with their children about their school work. Most of parents wanted to know their children's academic problems. The survey shows that seventy-one percent attended parent-teacher conference meetings, which are held twice per term.

Concerning home work, 65 percent of the students got help with home work from their father, mother, siblings, close relatives or tutors. Like Japanese and Chinese teachers, Vietnamese teachers assign large amounts of homework, and Vietnamese students devote significant amounts of their time to getting it done. It is often discussed

that urban children in Viet Nam spend more time doing their homework than children in rural areas. In this study, rural children have to spend at least one to two hours on homework. Fifteen percent did not have time for home work, 20 percent spent less than one hour a day on home work, 40 percent spent one hour per day on home work, and 25 percent spent two hours on home work. One obvious reason was that rural students have to do household chores after school. Table 16 provides a summary of variables as proxies for family social capital in this study.



**Table 16: Summary of Family Social Capital Variables**

Variables	Percentage %	Total number
Family structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• both parents at home;</li> <li>• single parents</li> <li>• widow;</li> <li>• grandparents at home</li> </ul>	94.00 0.8 6.1 60.2	360
Number of Siblings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one child;</li> <li>• two children;</li> <li>• three children;</li> <li>• four children;</li> <li>• five children;</li> <li>• more than five</li> </ul>	2.5 30.6 30.8 22.5 7.5 6.1	360
Parent-Child Interaction about School Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very often</li> <li>• Often</li> <li>• Some time</li> <li>• Rarely</li> <li>• Never</li> </ul>	55.3 41.7 2.5 0.9 0.3	359 ( missing 1)
Home work help from home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From parent</li> <li>• From sibling</li> <li>• From relatives</li> <li>• From tutor</li> <li>• None</li> </ul>	76.0 13.9 0.8 10.0 0.3	360
Parent-Teacher Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every meeting</li> <li>• Some time</li> <li>• Rarely</li> <li>• Never</li> </ul>	71.4 26.9 1.1 0.3	358 ( missing 2)
Voluntary contribution for school's fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash for parent association</li> <li>• Fund for learning promotion</li> <li>• In kind</li> <li>• No contribution</li> </ul>	3.1 94.2 2.4 0.6	359 ( missing 1)
Parents know other children's parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All</li> <li>• Some</li> <li>• Few</li> <li>• None of them</li> </ul>	89.7 9.7 0.6	358 ( missing 2)

## **Indicators of Financial Capital**

Although this study is not meant to extensively examine the variables related to financial capital and human capital, several variables related to family were used in the multivariate logistic regression models predicting student educational attainment. These include parent education and household income level.

Financial capital is measured by family income. Measures of family income are commonly included as independent variables in analyses of educational outcomes, with the assumption that children from wealthier families will have greater access and opportunities for education. Given the increasing cost of education in Viet Nam, I anticipate the household's economic status to be a strong predictor of educational achievement. Even at the primary education level, where education is technically free to all children, schooling is an expensive endeavor. Parents must pay for textbooks and school supplies. They must make annual contributions to the school's building fund and to different kinds of fees. It is not surprising that various studies have found Vietnamese households devoting an average of 9.8 percent of their budget to education (ADB, 2001, p. 77).

Precise data on family income is not easily obtained in developing countries. Since Viet Nam has developed indicators measuring the poverty line, I was able to obtain rich data on the income levels of 360 households. Households were aware of their household income and they reported their income level either in cash or in the amount of rice yielded. In addition to a specific question on household income, I collected data on the wealth and status of the family, for instance, data on the structural characteristics of houses, (including the types of roofing materials) and other assets. Field observation and

the investigation of cross tabulation results indicated that the brick-roof house is a good proxy measure for middle-income households, while cement or baton sheet roofs are good proxies for high socio-economic status. For the cases in the sample, the presence of a beton sheet roof highly correlates to high-come level.

**Table 17: Indicators of financial capital**

Variable	Percentage	Total number
Family Income Level		360
• High Income	14.4	
• Middle Income	74.2	
• Low Income	10.8	
• Under poverty line	0.3	
House's roof		360
• Sheet	0.6	
• Bricks	75.6	
• Cement	1.7	
• Be ton	22.2	
Family wealth (posses)		360
• Motorcycle	0.6	
• Bicycle	10.3	
• TV/VCR	2.5	
• Refrigerator	0.8	
• More than one items	85.8	
Tuition payment		360
• Paid	88.1	
• Not paid	11.9	

### **Indicators of Human Capital**

Parent education level was chosen as a proxy indicator of human capital. To measure the effect of parents' educational background, I included variables, coded zero to eight, indicating the father's and mother's highest level of education completed. Parents' education should have a positive effect on children's educational attainment and

development. Through their own experience with education, educated parents should be more aware of the benefits of education. They should be more likely to ensure that their own children have the chance to realize these benefits. While the survey asked about the educational background of the head of the household, husbands knew the educational background of their spouse and vice versa.

The survey data revealed that the mean educational level of fathers was 4.29, and that the standard deviation was .96. Meanwhile, the mean of educational level of mothers was 3.94, and the standard deviation was .92. This means that the average educational level of both fathers and mothers is junior secondary school. Table 18 provides a summary of the human capital indicators.

**Table 18: Indicators of the human capital**

Variable	Percentage	Total number
Mother's education		360 (missing 1)
• Adult literacy class	3.9	
• Elementary level	24.2	
• Junior secondary level	51.7	
• Senior secondary level	15.0	
• Vocational level	3.3	
• University level	1.4	
• Graduate level	0.3	
Father's education		355 (missing 5)
• Adult literacy class	0.8	
• Elementary level	11.4	
• Junior secondary level	55.6	
• Senior secondary level	23.1	
• Vocational level	3.6	
• University level	2.8	
• Graduate level	1.1	
Parent's expectation for children's education		356 ( missing 4)
• Finish junior secondary level	3.1	
• Have some secondary level	27.5	
• Get a degree from polytechnic school	12.8	
• Get a degree from learning-doing school	5.6	
• Get a degree from teacher training college	2.5	
• Get a degree from university	44.7	

#### 4.6.2 Dependent Variables

The researcher measured the dependent variable-- educational attainment-- using two indicators: the grade point average (GPA) from the last school year and school attendance. Though each measure is an insufficient and imperfect indicator, each provides meaningful information on how educational achievement is influenced by family and community social capital. For grade point average (GPA), like many other countries, Vietnamese schools consider GPA as one of the essential criteria to assess student achievement in school. For junior secondary schools, GPA is a composite score of language, mathematics, sciences and physical education throughout the school-year. The information on GPA was first reported by the student themselves. The teacher-assistant team then verifies it with the school records to ensure no error was made. The mean GPA of the 360 students surveyed was 2.40, with a standard deviation of 0.67 with five scales from failing to very good levels.

In regards to staying in school, among the 360 students in the sample, 46 students reported that they had dropped out from the school during their elementary school years, accounting for 12.8 percent. The mean dropout rate is 1.8 and the standard deviation is .33. Table 19 provides a description of all variables with coding scheme, means and standard deviations including independent and dependent variables



**Table 19: Description, Means and Standard Deviation of Dependent and Independent Variables Used in Analysis of Family- based and Community-based Social Capital and Educational Attainment in Me Linh District, Vinh Phuc Province**

Name	Coding Scheme	Mean	S.D.	Median
<u>Dependent Variables</u>				
School Attendance	Coded 1= regularly 2= irregularly	1.01	.13	1.0
Academic performance	Coded: 1 = very good 2 = good 3= adequate 4= poor 5= failing	2.40	.67	2.0
<u>Independent Variables</u>				
Individual Factor				
Age of child	Child's age ranging between 10 and 18	13.85		
Sex of Child	Coded : 1= male child 2 = female child	1.48	.	
<u>Family Background</u>				
Family Income	Coded: 1= high income ; 2= middle income 3= Low income-at poverty line 4= Under poverty line	1.96	.52	2.0
Father's Education	Coded 1= adult literacy classes 3= elementary education 4= junior secondary 5= senior secondary 6=vocational secondary 7= university level; 8= graduate level	4.29	.96	4.0
Mother's Education	Coded 1= adult literacy classes 3= elementary education 4= lower secondary 5= upper secondary;	3.94	.92	4.0

Continued, next page

Table 19 "Cont."

<u><i>Family Social Capital</i></u>  <i>Structural Attributes</i>  <b>Family structure</b>  <b>Number of siblings</b>  <b>Siblings dropped out of school</b>	6=vocational secondary 7= university level 8= graduate level			
		3.2	1.2	3.0
	Coded: 1=one child; 2= two children; 3= three children; 4=four children; 5= five children; 6= more than five Coded 1 if siblings dropped out from school	1.67	.46	2.0
<i>Process Attributes</i> Parents expectation for children' education level	Coded: 0= don't know; 1= finish primary education; 2= finish secondary education; 3=have some secondary education; 4= get a degree from polytechnic; 5=get a degree from work-study school; 6= get a degree from teacher training college; 7= get a degree from university	5.14	1.90	
Parent-Child interaction about School matter  Parents supervise children on school work at home	Coded : 1= very often, 2= sometimes, 3= few; 4= never  Coded: 1= very much; 2= sometimes; 3=rarely 4=never	1.46  1.61	.55  .64	1.0  2.0

Continued, next page

Table 19 "Cont."

<b>How often parent(s) help with homework</b>	<b>Coded:; 1= very often; 2= often ; 3=sometimes; 4= never</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>.82</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Hours that children spend on household chores</b>	<b>Coded: 0= no; 1= one hour; 2= two hours; 3=three hours; 4= four hours; 5=five hours</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>.76</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Attend parents' meeting	Coded: 1= every meeting; 2=once in a while; 3= rarely; 4=never	1.29	.47	1.0
Know parent(s) of child's friends	Coded: 1= everyone; 2= some, 3= few; 4= none	1.09	.29	1.0
Discuss with parent(s) of child's friends about school matters	Coded: 1= often; 2= sometimes; 3=rarely; 4=never			
Voluntarily participate in school	Coded: 0=no answer; 1= often; 2=sometimes; 3=few; 4=never			
Influence of kinship or clan on learning and education	Coded: 1=very strong; 2=strong; 3=OK; 4=weak; very weak			
Drop-out	Coded 1 if child was dropped-out			

#### **4.6.4 Quantitative Data & Methods**

The researcher used five approaches to estimate the relationships among the variables: (1) Frequency counting; Cross tabulation tables and Chi-square tables; (2) Coefficient correlations; (3) a factor analysis ;(4) a logistic regression model; and (5) analyses of variance ANOVA.

Questionnaire data was entered into the SPSS 10-1 statistical computer packages for appropriate statistical analyses. More importantly, patterns emerging from the in-depth interviews were noted for comparison with data collected through interviews. Interview data, collected through audio-tapes and hand-written notes were transcribed and organized around the three main themes guided by the research questions. The researcher developed a key for interpreting the responses to each question and then analyzes the responses.

The analysis proceeds to explain how social capital from families and communities is a significant factor that contributes to children's educational attainment. In addition, I employed variables related to family income and parent education level that reflected the resources possessed by parents which could affect student achievement. The first step in the analysis centered on a simplified list of family and community variables that could affect student attainment. Descriptive statistics were used to present a composite picture of respondent characteristics. Means and standard deviations are employed to show an overall picture of participant responses. Similarly, frequency, chi square, cross tabulation and coefficient correlations provide an understanding of the necessary data transformations as well as operational definitions of each variable and

discussion regarding measurement. Cross-tabulation and chi-squares have been done to show those variables that related to one another and which are significant to the research questions. The Chi-square was used to test the hypothesis and compare the bi-value (P value) to determine whether the observed value of the hypothesis was true. The frequencies and Chi-squares results were shown in the tables in Chapter 5 then analyzed and discussed. Coefficient correlations are employed to compare a pair correlation in order to see if there were significant differences between the means of the variables.

It is important to gauge the degree to which parents are engaged in the interaction process with their children. Since a household questionnaire is used to measure households' responses to issues related to community-based social capital in terms of associations' membership, group's involvement in school's activities, clan/kinship and media usage, it is appropriate for me to apply the factor analysis technique in order to determine possible factors that might be derived from the survey data and to construct an interpretive factor solution. The factor analysis of the community social capital is conducted for two purposes. First, the analyses were conducted to identify meaningful dimensions of social capital. Secondly, this analysis is also part of a data reduction process to reduce the large number of social capital variables.

Generally, the factor analysis procedure includes: (1) factor loading; (2) factor relationship, and (3) the labeling of factor (Bryant & Yarnold, 1995, p. 115). Utilizing the "SPSS for Windows" Statistical Package, Version 10.1, the factor analysis for extraction of factors was used. Only those factors having an eigenvalue of 1.00 or more were subject to selection of a factor solution (Kaiser's rule suggests retaining only those principal components whose variances are one and more. Cited in Bryant & Yarnold,



1995, p. 116). The factors are rotated using varimax rotation in order to produce a suitable structure which expected that loadings on each particular factor could be maximized. This would also enhance the interpretation of factors.

Further analyses look at the relationships among variables. Analyses of variance (abbreviated ANOVA) are used to determine the amount of correlation between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables simultaneously. According to Fox (1997, p. 155) ANOVA refers to procedures for “fitting and testing linear models in which the independent variables are categorical.” I use three-way ANOVA analysis to testing hypotheses about main effects and interactions among variables which predict educational outcomes. Moreover, ANOVA can test hypotheses concerning the effects of multiple independent variables. Weinfurt (1995, 259) indicates that ANOVA is an examination of means and mean differences. ANOVA analysis provides a means of analyzing situations in which the dependent variable is affected simultaneously by several independent variables. I evaluate the significance of a group of variables by first analyzing the independent variables on a dependent measure in the model. I compare the two models as they predict family interaction, the types of parent involvement, and student Grade Point Average. I begin analyzing the data by testing for correlations amongst all of the variables involved in order to identify the general pattern of relationships among the individual variables. Following an examination of the correlations, I investigated for the amount of variance explained by the independent variables and compare the differences of variances.

After these preliminary steps and successfully building the several scales which were used in the analysis, I carried out model comparisons using the amount of variance

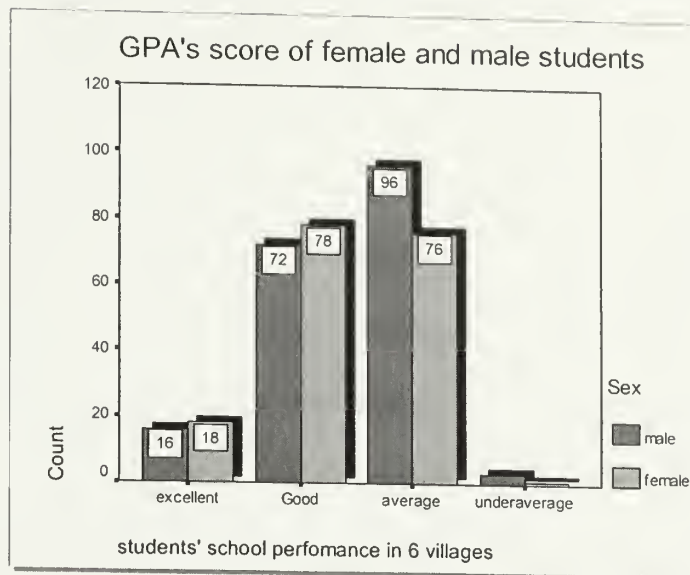
differences. The first models include financial and human variables and measured their relationship to both types of educational attainment; the third model includes family interaction, home work help and parent –school contact. The overall model analyzed the impact of all the independent variables as they relate to school attendance and GPA as measures of educational attainment.

The changes in  $R^2$  were carefully studied in order to establish the contribution that the independent variables make to the model. Generally, in this general linear model procedure, group of variables is evaluated in terms of their main effects. There is a number of interesting main effects and interaction effects which will be analyzed. Some potentially significant relationships include: an interaction between family social capital and human capital, an interaction between financial capital and social capital, an interaction among family social capital, human capital and financial capital. In sum, I look for direct and indirect effects of social capital, human capital, and financial capital as they affect educational attainment.

### **Data Analysis on Gender**

Using the household survey data, I examine the educational achievement of boys and girls. Figure 8 provides their GPA scores.

**Figure 8: GPA's score of female and male student**



The Figure 8 exhibits no significant difference in boys' and girls' achievements. This finding suggests that adults are more likely to be egalitarian in making decisions about their children's schooling. Even if they perceive greater prospects for the boys in the modern sector employment, they may be more likely to appreciate the other less tangible benefits of education for their children. As a result, they are more likely to ensure that their daughters are not only enrolled but also perform well in school.

The comparison of the analyses of girls' and boys' educational achievements provides some evidence that there is no big difference in terms of educational attainment. This is consistent with many other research findings in Viet Nam, namely that there are relatively few differences in education between boys and girls. This finding suggests that the children's educational attainment depends on the parents' views of their children's futures.

## Data of educational attainment across six communes

The preliminary analysis of educational attainment includes the variables of attendance, rates of drop-out, and tutoring needs across six communes of this study.

Table 20 provides a description of the drop-out rate, attendance and tutoring needs of students from six communes

**Table 20: Cross tabulation and Chi Square across 6 communes in Me Linh**

Communes	Drop-out	Attendance		Tutoring	
		Regularly	Irregularly	No	Yes
Hoang Kim	9	60		52	8
Nam Viem	10	60		43	16
Ngoc Thanh	5	55	5	49	11
Phuc Yen	9	58	1	23	37
Quang Minh	0	60		3	57
Tien Chau	13	59	1	17	43
Total	46	352	7	187	172
	$\chi^2=15.453$ df=5 two tailed **p<.05	$\chi^2= 16.413$ df= 5 two tailed **p<.05		$\chi^2= 131.425$ df=5 two tailed ***p<.001	

From this above table, Tien Chau commune has the largest number of students who dropped out during their course of school time.(13 students out of 60), while Nam Viem commune has 10 students out of 60 students who responded to the survey questions. While Ngoc Thanh commune has only five students who dropped out, it has five other students who indicated in the survey questions that they attended school irregularly.

The cross-tabulations and Chi-squares have been done to show the differences among students of six villages in terms of their school attendance, GPA scores, tutoring needs and drop-out rates. The results of cross tabulation and chi-square procedures show

that the tutoring needs have a high difference of obtaining observed values for six communes. The Chi-square for tutoring needs was  $\chi^2 = 131.425$  ( $p < .001$ ). The cross tabulation shows that Hoang Kim commune and Ngoc Thanh commune have the lowest number of students for not needing tutoring need. Quang Minh and Tien Chau communes have the highest numbers of students for tutoring needs. :

In terms of learning achievement as measured by GPA scores across six communes, the cross tabulation runs on children's achievement which indicate that there is a difference among six communes for GPA score that students obtain. For instance, Quang Minh commune has the highest levels of excellent and good (15 and 33), and it has 12 students categorized as average achievers. Ngoc Thanh commune has the largest number of students at the average level and has the lowest number of students at the excellent and good levels (excellent and good levels: 10; students as average and under-average levels: 50).

The proportions of each level of achievement are: excellent (10.58 percent), good (41.0 percent), average (47.0 percent) and below average (2 percent).

See Table 21.

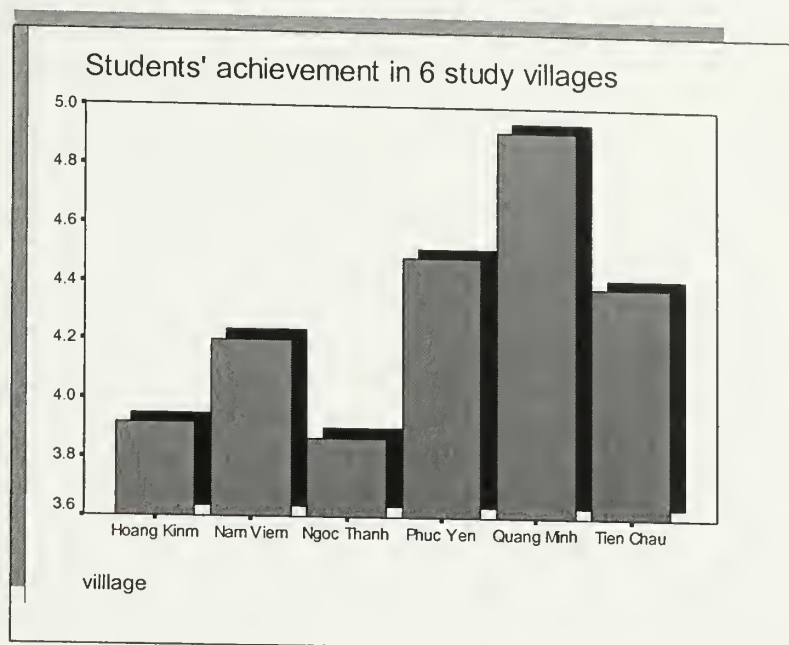


**Table 21: GPA scores rank across 6 communes**

	Excellent	Good	Average	Under-average	Total
Hoang Kim	Communes	29	29	1	60
Nam Viem	2	18	40		60
Ngoc Thanh	1	9	48	2	60
Phuc Yen	7	28	24	1	60
Quang Minh	15	33	12		60
Tien Chau	8	33	19		60
Total	34	150	172	4	360
$X^2 = 81.58, df = 15, p < .001$					

The Chi-square procedure showed that the probability of obtaining the distribution of observed values is high (chi-square is 81.58,  $p < .001$ ). This implies that there is a difference among achievement levels across six communes. Students from Ngoc Thanh mountainous commune where the San Diu ethnic minority lives, have the most average achievers (48). Quang Minh commune has the largest number of excellent students (15). See figure 9 below.

**Figure 9: Students' educational achievement in six study communes**



The results indicate that there is a big difference in terms of tutoring need.

Parents in Hoang Kim and Ngoc Thanh communes may be less willing to invest in additional educational expenses, like tutoring for their children. They may feel that children have responsibilities to help with housework and take care of young children at the end of the school day. For these reasons, while children in Hoang Kim and Ngoc Thanh have made advances in enrollment, they still do not have access to important resources that help them excel in school or advance to higher levels of education.

As expected, good academic performance significantly increases a child's chances of receiving tutoring. This supports the argument that parents tend to invest in children who are doing well in school and have the greatest chance of continuing in the highly-competitive educational system. In examining the measures for Quang Minh, Tien Chau and Phuc Yen villages, the number of students taking tutoring is increasing ( Quang Minh: 57/60; Tien Chau: 43/60 and Phuc Yen: 37/60). .

#### 4.6.5 Data Collection in Case Study Sites

Three data collection strategies were used in the case study sites: open-ended interviews, field observation, and the use of secondary of sources on the organizational characteristics and history of each commune from secondary sources. Qualitative interviews allow for open-ended questions which provide a better understanding of the motivations, process and strategies underlying social interaction (Loffland & Loffland, 1995). Within each commune, a focus group interview was organized that includes school and community which are likely to offer distinctive perspectives on school-community relationships. The six focus groups include community members, representatives of different local organizations, school administrations, teachers, parents, and students. Eighteen individuals were interviewed in six communes, including the director of education services, the school principals, teachers, students, and community members. In all, the 24 tape-recorded, open-ended interviews of 30 minutes to two hours in length were conducted in Hoang Kim, Nam Viem, Ngoc Thanh, Phuc Yen, Quang Minh, and Tien Chau.

Interviewees were selected with two primary criteria in mind: (1) to gain the insights of people who were particularly knowledgeable about the school, its history, and its relationship to the community and (2) to select respondents so as to have the sum total of interviews in each commune represent as broad and varied a sampling of responses and opinions as possible. Therefore, when I was choosing multiple respondents in a given category – such as teachers, for example – I tried to select a relatively young teacher and one who had been in the school for a while, or one who lived in the community and one who did not.

Field observation was also used in each commune to observe patterns of informal interaction among students, parents, teachers, and other community members. Informal observation was carried out while I was in each school and community conducting interviews. I also attended and observed at a school board meeting in Quang Minh commune to develop a better understanding of issues facing the school and to observe interaction between the director of district education service, the school principal, and community members in attendance.

Other information on each commune was collected from secondary data sources. Information on history, cultural characteristics, including geographic and ethnic origins of residents, historical population patterns and the economic base of the community/region was gathered from published documents to help describe the context within which each of the local education system operates. Basic secondary data indicators pertaining to student achievement and school-community networks were reviewed before beginning interviews in each district and provided more informed questions to use in the interviews. Likewise, observation at school events sometimes suggested questions which I then raised in subsequent interviews in the commune.

### **Data Analysis Strategies for the Case Studies**

Interviewing, observation, and collection of other secondary data over a six-month period yielded an enormous amount of data on the case study sites. My overall strategy-- that educational attainment of students is linked with the quality of the relationship between the school and community (social capital) – guided data collection and also informed my analysis of the data. The interview guides for the open-ended interviews were structured around the crucial elements of social capital: networks, norms,

trust and commitments. However, the focus on social capital did not prevent me from being open to other explanations offered by respondents or collecting other indicators that might offer competing or contradictory explanations for differences in educational attainment. Because much of my data were perceptions and insights of interview respondents from the six communes, my general strategy for analyzing was to immerse myself in the data from the sites and try to develop a general understanding of the situation in each commune and the factors affecting educational attainment there. The use of extensive verbatim quotes in the data analysis is designed to illustrate or support certain points that I felt here important to the research question. In addition, quotes reflect an alternative viewpoint or explanation to support my arguments.

## **Conclusion**

The research methods, descriptions of survey sites, measurements of variables and the descriptive results of the survey presented in this chapter illuminate the ways in which structural and processual factors of family, community and school social capital influence children's educational attainment. Chapter five is a test of hypotheses based on research questions and a discussion of research findings resulting from both quantitative statistical models and interpretive data gained from household's surveys.



## CHAPTER 5

### COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EDUCATION

Chapters Five and Six contain the empirical analysis of the dissertation.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the main hypothesis of this study aims to determine whether social capital has an independent and significant effect on educational attainment. Seven research questions are being analyzed extensively in these two chapters. Statistical model testing and interpretive data for each group of research questions are outlined in the following Table 22.

**Table 22: Outline of model testing and interpretive data**

**Main hypothesis: Social capital has an independent and significant effect on children's educational attainment**

<i>I. What are the key dimensions of community-based social capital?</i>	<i>II. What are the main effects of family-based social capital on student attainment?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frequency tables and a correlation coefficient matrix about membership, trust &amp; interaction with local government.</li><li>• A factor analysis on trust</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Logistic regression analysis on school attendance</li><li>• General Lineal Model (Three- way ANOVA) of the main effects of financial, human and social capital within the family on children's learning outcomes</li><li>• General Lineal Model (Three-way ANOVA) of the main effects and interaction effects of reported family-based social capital associated with human and financial capital</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus group and Individual Interviews</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual and Focus group Interviews</li></ul>

The main focus of Chapter Five is to investigate several dimensions of community-based social capital and its impacts on education that are assessed in the

context of rural Viet Nam. This Chapter utilizes data from the household survey and from focus group and individual interviews. Numerous questions on the survey were designed to examine the notions of community social capital through membership in organizations, trust level and clan and community influences on education. I use both quantity and quality research methods to answer each research question.

*I. What are the key dimensions of community-based social capital?*

**5.1 What groups and associations do people join and how do they function at the village level? Why do local people join the groups?**

The first main research question explored the key dimensions of community-based social capital. Here I examined the extent to which local people are engaged in different types of groups and associations at the village level. Several indicators similar to Narayan's study in Tanzania (Narayan, 1997) were used to define and measure how rural people assess themselves in terms of trust, unity, and spirit of participation. Through a participatory methodology in Narayan's study, local people can relate and assess the function of formal and informal village-level institutions. This methodology also helped reveal how social capital is built, and how it affects household welfare. My field work in Viet Nam was informed by a methodological commitment to capture the interpretive ideas of the people with all their possible nuances and textures. The empirical situation is never static; it evolves and changes in ways that are not always easy to pin down. Using a deliberately open-ended and flexible approach, I tried to capture the fluidity of the situation so as to bring out participants' views and experiences.

In its emphasis on rural development, the Vietnamese government has tried to establish various rural associations for poverty alleviation and promotion of members' well-being which would be linked to government programs. Data on the number and membership of women's associations (*hoi phu nu*), farmers' associations (*hoi nong dan*), and veterans' association (*hoi cuu chien binh*) have been used as proxy indicators of social capital.

In this study, 360 households were asked 12 questions relevant to the social structure of an association's participation, religion, trust, media usage and interaction with local officials. Tables 23- 26 provide an overview of associational membership and people's perceptions about the group.

**Table 23: Membership in formal and informal groups and associations**

Group type	Percentage reporting membership
Women's group	23
Farmers' group	22.5
Other groups ( art group, elder group, youth group, group of people from native- born land, Buddhist group, Catholic group)	22.5
Memberships in two or more groups	20.3
Veterans' group	4.7

**Table 24: Why people join groups**

Provide encouragement, emotional support	30.6
Bring people together	13.1
Economic support	12.8
Share information, news & ideas	9.4
Strengthen religious belief	1.7
Provide consolation	.3
More than one reason	25.0

**Table 25: Overview of associational activity**

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Membership declining (1); the same (2); increased (3)</b>	2.2	26.9	63.1			
<b>How are groups functioning, 1=very good, 2=good; 3=average; 4=poor; 5= very poor</b>	41.4	31.9	18.9	.3	.6	
<b>Does group receive outside support? 1=NGOs; 2=government; 3= foreign donors; 4= federation; 5= bank loan; 6= other organization</b>	.6	56.4	3.3	.8	10.8	24.7
<b>What happens, if a member does not pay the fee? 1= asked to leave the group; 2=delay in payment accepted; 3=nothing happens</b>	4.4	75.0	13.1			

**Table 26: Are the group's members the same kin or the same clan?**

Groups members	Percentage
<b>Any one in the commune</b>	70.8
<b>Different groups</b>	13.6
<b>Close relative</b>	5.6
<b>Same clan</b>	3.1
<b>At the same workplace</b>	.3

These questions broadly identify two areas, the first of which covers participation in the community: membership in an association, people's views on *doi moi* process, notions of trust, the role of education and religious practices. The second area covers the extent of contact with local government and media usage. Responses are typically qualitative categories of the type: a great deal/somewhat/not at all or frequently/sometimes/never. For each question, I have selected the type of response that is most consistent with the notion of trust, membership and its relation with a school's activities.

Out of 360 households, 93 percent of the people interviewed belong to at least one group. On average, people belong to 1.5 groups. Membership is the most common in the women's group (23 percent) and the farmers' association (22.5 percent) (Table 23). Sixty three percent reported that membership has increased in groups (Table 25). This result was also supported by the cross tabulation method. For instance, 148 respondents (42 percent) indicated that their group functions very well, while 115 interviewees (32 percent) expressed that their associations work well. Very few people reported the functioning of groups as poor or very poor; 68 people (19 percent) rated group functioning at an average level (Table 25).

*Why do people join groups?* Regarding to this question, the main responses were that people join group because associations: “provide encouragement” (31 percent); followed by “bring people together” and “economic support” (13 percent) and allow people to “share new ideas and opinions (9 percent). Twenty five percent of respondents indicated they joined associations for several reasons, either to get more information or to receive economic support (Table 24).

A pre-set check-list of household survey may provide a broad and generic explanation. For instance, these responses almost certainly may reflect a preconception on the part of the interviewers, who only asked the respondents to rank them. In addition, the responses were often vague and mainly provided a catch-all way to explain the membership's expectation and groups' functioning.

In order to better answer the above responses and to explain why group membership has increased over the years, I conducted in-depth interviews with focus groups of men and women and six individual households in six communes in order to



shed more light on changes in local associational activity. A striking feature from all the interviews with focus groups as well as with individuals was that the *doi moi* policy has influenced on every aspect of the daily life of the Vietnamese people, including their participation in different associations. Informants stated that people's living conditions have become more stable and improved to some extent. For the purpose of this study, my participants spoke out on different facets of *doi moi* policy: that it open the door to more opportunities and to the challenges of a market economy. Their voices reflected people's perspectives to some extent:

We are facing a great impact of *doi moi*. We have to work harder to have a better life than before. We cannot only work on our own rice fields or in our own gardens; we have to participate in activities of our groups in which we are members, such as *hoi phu nu* (womens' association) and *hoi nong dan* (farmers' association). We can ask for a credit loan and learn different new farm techniques through our associations. For instance, we cannot only rely on rice-crops, but we need to expand and diversify our cultivation to *trong dau*, *nuoi tam* to make silks and other productive plants. Our VACVINA's association (*Hoi Nhung nguoi lam vuon*)<sup>7</sup> provided us seeds and helped us how to cultivate new plants.

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<sup>7</sup> The VAC system is the English acronym of three Vietnamese words: V for *vuon* or gardening, A for *ao* or fish pond and C for *chuong* or animal husbandry ( in English). The VAC system has been widely promoted for over a decade by Vacvina as an approach to crop diversification, and encourage recycling of energy and by-products between home garden, fishpond and livestock.



“Our group is a secure place where I can ask for a loan for livestock, a fish pond and non-agriculture activities so that my family can diversify our crops in high return.”

For local people in Quang Minh commune, where they have experienced many changes, a farmer stated:

We have a lot of advantages at this time. Yes, some decades ago, we didn't have enough food, clothes and lived in thatched houses. Thanks to *doi moi*, the living standard of our village is better. In general, we do not have to worry so much about rice, clothes and other things. Now, we can have everything easily if we have money.

For many women, *doi moi* is also associated with an open-door policy and it has brought new dimensions to their daily lives. A representative of the women's group in Ngoc Thanh's mountainous commune indicated:

To me, *doi moi* is not an abstract conception. *Doi moi* means change for a new life and opens our minds: we can have equality in each person's position and efforts. In our group, we help women not only to productive farming, but also give them good advice on family planning, breast feeding and nutrition, hygiene and first aid. We give them the booklet *Facts for Life* for free and organize workshops and seminars on different topics related to our daily life.

Commune leaders in all six villages stated that the extension of different groups has been important in poverty alleviation. They all recognized the crucial roles of associational activities as they explained:

For the sustainable development of our communes, it is crucial to have the full cooperation of local organizations such as the Women's Union, the Agricultural Extension Center, Youth's Organization and the Farmers' Association. These associations help local farmers access available sources, such as credit, loan and different micro-finance programs.



“We are facing a great impact of *doi moi*. We have to work harder to have a better life than before.... We can ask for a credit loan and learn different new farm techniques through our associations....”

Many households have benefited from VAC practices – the Vietnamese acronym for combining gardening, fishing, and animal husbandry. In Hoang Kim, for example, 20 percent of the total surveyed households earned much more from their gardens than from rice planting. For example, a farmer's family in Hoang Minh planted flowers and ornament trees on his 500 square meters. His earnings equaled what the family would get from 5,000 square meters of rice.

In the mountainous areas of Ngoc Thanh commune, numerous households have developed agro-forestry to earn income. For example, a family in Ngoc Thanh where I visited has planted two hectares of styrax and one hectare of fruit trees and tea. After five years, the family has earned 40 million dong (\$US 1= VND15,000 in June 2001) from the four hectares of styrax and 7 million dong from fruit trees and tea each year.

*Doi moi* is a dynamic process with many perspectives. It is hard for some villages, where local people cannot absorb investment programs from the district's and province's government or donors, such as obtaining loans from banks. *Doi moi* is also associated with material level through consumption. A veteran in Hoang Kim village shared his concern:

Yes, our living conditions are better with the pace of our country's development now. But I have seen that modernization also brings negative elements, what we call social evils. Many negative elements appear in our small town area, such as prostitutes, gambling, drug, and criminal cases. The gap between rich and poor is wide. However, *doi moi* is a positive and necessary tendency for our country. We really needed it for the country's development, a long time ago.

Many participants experienced inner conflicts about how to perceive and define the problems which they saw as disadvantages of *doi moi*. This was because they have to face new challenges.

### **The Role of Clan/Kinship in expanding membership and education.**

During my conversation with people in Tien Chau village, it became evident that clan/kinship is considered an important element in membership expansion and a group's functioning. One of the reasons for large group membership can be explained by the group members' relationship to the same clan. As I expected to determine if the relationship between people, associational membership, level of trust in government and



interest in public affairs are elements of community-based social capital in rural areas of Viet Nam, pair wise correlation coefficients were used to address this research question (see Table 30). The pair wise correlation coefficients between membership and clan/kinship was significant at  $r = 0.49$ . Positive and strong relationships suggested that respondents who declared membership in any organization or association are either a kin or from the same clan in their villages.

Clan/kinship has become an identity among the villagers across six villages, providing social connectedness so that villagers related to each other. Clan/kinship has an impact on the education of their children. According to the old residents in Tien Chau village, clan/kinship not only functions for motivating children to school, but also has a large impact on the behavior of an individual child. An old man stated:

The Nguyen clan or the Le clan in my village spearheads the educational events for children in the village. If any child in our clan obtains good academic results (*ket qua hoc tap tot*), our clan will have an award for the child. I think any contact where we get parents of our clan in, when we ask parents to come in for whatever reason, that's positive. I'm very glad to see that if our clan has a meeting on educational matters, clan's members always attended fully and they often provided initiatives to encourage our children in doing a good job in school. If any child has a problem in school, parents are up here and try to help the child and the family in a way they need.

In fact, social connectedness is never an unmediated process. Clan/kinship is not only a type of close network, but also a notion of engagement among villagers.

Another finding from the in-depth interviews with focus groups and individual households revealed that there were many issues beyond the scope of households to tackle but which were amenable to "a systematic help from the community," or which called for greater attention of associations and groups or higher level agencies. For instance, insufficient rainfall, a typhoon, a fall in rice prices on the market, sickness, the



inability to borrow funds or the limitation to other key resources. Hence, the role of different associations and groups was significant to help people in need. The micro-credit program organized by the Local Womens' Union in Ngoc Thanh was helpful for many poor households.

Three women members shared their common views:

Our group is a secure place where I can ask for a loan for livestock, a fish pond and non-agricultural activities so that my family can diversify our crops in high-return.

Before joining the women's group, it was very difficult for me to get a balance that would enable me to buy a pig. Now, with the help of the women's credit program, I have raised 3 pigs and next year I can buy a buffalo.

My health is much better now because I'm now using a contraceptive method so that I can avoid unwanted pregnancies. Thanks to *Hoi phu nu* (the women's union) in my village, I've been aware about family planning and I'm now an advocate for women's issues.

### **Remaining Issues of Poor Households**

The process of *doi moi* and industrialization were caused many difficulties for families. There also has been concern over how various associations and groups reach the poorest households among the poor. Through my observation and in-depth interviews, I found that the poorest still face difficulties in obtaining access to loans and other credit schemes. Several household's heads commented that even though the main purpose of credit programs was to help the poorest of the poor, it was likely that the district or commune chose households whose were ranked "average" or "above average" for loan.

Using similar reasoning, the president of the women's union in Hoang Kim commune felt that she had to choose average households rather than poor families to

participate in a poultry project in which the local women's union played a coordination role. Her reasoning was: "We have to choose families that already have some pigs and cows or fruit trees so that they will be able to repay. In case the project fails, they will have other income sources to pay back the loan."

This issue raised the question whether the poor families have more difficulties in accessing available formal resources, such as bank loans and rural credit schemes from a wide variety of agencies.<sup>8</sup> Several heads of relatively poor households said that households that are not poor are able to borrow at reasonable interest rates. They said that the options they perceived to be available to them could not possibly earn enough to cover monthly interest charges and repayment. A farmer admitted:

As my family is struggling to meet our daily needs, my family relies more on informal credit than formal credit. I can borrow money from my extended family, friends and neighbors, who often lend to cover daily subsistence needs, to build or upgrade houses, to meet costs of weddings and funerals. Loans may be in cash or in kind. I feel obliged to reciprocate with some specific or implicit obligation.

I spoke with a widow with two children, who said that she would not attend Women's Union meetings frequently because she was afraid to join the credit program. She said, "I could not repay the money if I can only borrow it for one year." Her reason was that credit rules with their complicated procedures and collateral arrangements were main obstacles to many households, especially to those headed by women.

In fact, poor families often look for informal credit because access is easier,

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<sup>8</sup> There are a number of agencies that are involved in organizing rural credit schemes. For instance, Viet Nam Bank for Agriculture (VBARD); Viet Nam Bank for the Poor (VBP); People's Credit Funds (PCFs); Mass Organizations: Women's Union, Farmers' Association and Veteran's Association; and International NGOs and donor agencies.  
(Source: UNDP, 1998, p. 41)

transaction costs are lower, there are no application formalities, and loans generally can be used for a much wider range of purposes. As I learned of several similar stories in other households, it seems that formal credit schemes for the poor do not reach the poorest families.

The president of the farmers' associations in Quang Minh commented:

I think that a poverty alleviation program should not be just a banking transaction nor should it be a give-away to a selected few. It would be much better if the credit channel is through a district or commune agricultural extension network or through NGOs, with broad community-based participation in deciding how credit is to be allocated and with local monitoring and advice available financial management and use of loans.

Although this study was not specifically designed to examine credit programs in rural areas, the stories of focus groups and individual households provided deeper levels of explanation about several groups' functions and holistic reasoning, which in turn may at some point yield more persuasive insights than calculation on a linear logic of "cause and effect". To a certain extent, the two research methods used in this study revealed that associations and groups play an important role in the poverty alleviation programs in Viet Nam during the *doi moi* process. Clearly, rural poverty is a root cause and a primary task of many programs in rural areas in Viet Nam. In the struggle against poverty, associations and groups are essential in enabling their members to gain information, to receive training, to access credit schemes, or other forms of assistance.

Voluntary associations are another matter, and their vibrancy is important in many respects in social life in Viet Nam. For instance, *Hoi dong huong* (a group of people originally born in the same area) and *Hoi Lop* (alumni classmates), can involve poor and

powerless groups. These voluntary groups have various forms of activities and show their solidarity not only by achieving important material goals, but also by giving opportunities to people to connect with one another and to learn methods of cooperation and organized work. This enhances active participation in society and the community at large by empowering individuals and raising their social understanding. However, data on the numbers, memberships, and activity of voluntary associations were, at the time of this study, neither available nor comparable at commune level. This may indicate a potential area for a further research.

## **5.2 What does “trust” mean at the local level? How can we assess trust levels?**

As social capital is thought of as a resource that gives people the ability to work together for common purpose (Coleman, 1990), trust is viewed as the heart of shared values and social capital. Most studies on social capital have employed survey research techniques to “measure indices of associated activities and reciprocal trust in community” (Bhattacharya, 2001, p.64). Given that social and cultural contexts vary widely, so should the tools and techniques, particularly in this study where I use both research methods.

It is problematic to find measures of trust and mutual solidarity in Me Linh district of Viet Nam that are similar to those in Italy and Tanzania where previous studies have explored this question. When applying a theory to a very different context from the original one, it is important to be able to adapt and modify concepts while maintaining the basic ideas. To investigate the vibrancy of a given civic community in rural Viet Nam during the *doi moi* process, I employed variables that reflecting Putnam’s framework on horizontal relationships and trust levels. As mentioned in Chapter Two

regarding Putnam's work in Italy, a civic community is characterized by active participation in public affairs, horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation, bonds of solidarity and trust, and distinctive social structures and practices characterized by thriving local associations (Putnam, 1993). Analysis of these variables provides a measure of the degree of community social capital in Viet Nam.

In this study questions about general trust in local government as well as interpersonal trust were asked. The first was "How much trust/confidence do you have in the local government?" For this question, the mean value is 3.7, with a standard deviation close to 1 (scales from 1 to 5 – more greater, greater, same, fewer and much fewer). The second was "Are there more or fewer people you can trust now?" For this question, the mean value is 3.9, with a standard deviation is 1.2 (scale from 1 to 5) and the third is "If yes, what are the reasons for increasing trust? For this question, the mean value is 2.7 and the standard deviation is 2.4 with the scale from 1 to 6.

It is important to emphasize that the majority of people in this study stated that they have maintained trust in their state and local government (only 7 percent do not trust their local government). Overall, more than 90 percent of people said that they trusted each other much more than before or maintain the same level of trust among each other. 71 percent indicated that this increase in trust resulted from the impact of market economy and the fact that life in general has been much improved by *doi moi and*. While decline of trust was no more than ten percent, four percent of respondents pointed out that declining trust was caused by a number of persons who had become selfish. Close to five percent of respondents showed their concern for the decline of cultural values. For instance, to the question of whether there are more people that "you can trust now" more



than 90 percent of people said that they trust each other much more than before or maintain the same level of trust among each other. See Tables 27-29 below for descriptive data :

**Table 27: How much confidence/trust do you have to the local government?**

Level of trust	Percentage
Much more greater	22.00
More greater	25.00
Same	46.00
Fewer less	5.00
Much fewer less	2.00

**Table 28: Are there more or fewer people you can trust now?**

Levels of trust	Percentage
Much more greater	25.8
More greater	35.8
Same	30.8
Fewer less	5.3
Much fewer less	1.7

**Table 29: Reasons for maintaining of trust**

Reasons	Percentage
Life more improved	43.3
Impact of market economy	27.8
Open job market	28.9

Pair wise correlation coefficients were tested and the coefficients represented the degree of association, positive or negative, between variables. Table 30 presents correlation coefficients of variables in terms of types of (a) associational activities, (b) people's trust, and (c) their relationship with local government. It also shows the results of testing the significance of each correlation coefficient.

**Table 30. Correlation Coefficient Matrix about group's membership, trust, elections and interaction with local government**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Membership	1.00										
2. Group's functioning	.42**	1.00									
3. Kinship/Clan	.49**	.31**	1.00								
4. Role of Education	.11*	.11*	.42**	1.00							
5. Religious Attendance	.059	.31**	.01	.08	1.00						
6. Trust in people	.19**	.19**	.21**	-.19	-.21	1.00					
7. Contact with local officials	-.17	.02	.03	.11*	.32**	-.21	1.00				
8. Receive help from local government	-.11	.04	.03	.01	.27**	-.17	.87**	1.00			
9. Read newspaper	.06	.06	-.09	.17**	.13*	.06	.19**	.02	1.00		
10. Listen to radio	-.05	.05	-.10	-.00	.03	-.05	.09	.00	.42**	1.00	
11. Election	.19	.12*	-.12	-.12	.01	-.24	.08	-.06	-.06	0.4	1.00
										3	

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

1. Membership; 2. Group's functioning; 3. Kinship/Clan; 4. Education; 5. Religious Attendance; 6. Trust in people; 7. Contact local government; 8. Receive help from local government; 9. Read newspaper; 10. Listen to radio; 11. Election

In terms of membership in associations, the variables “membership” and “group’s functioning” were positively related ( $r = .42$ ). As a matter of fact, the relationship between the variables of membership and trust were moderate and positively related,  $r = 0.2$ ,  $p < .001$ . It is significant that members placed trust in each other. Positive and significant relationships were also evident between trust and group’s functioning ( $r = 0.2$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This would support the notion that trust in the members of an association is leverage for a group’s function as well as a rise in its membership.

Out of the 11 variables that I used for the above pair wise testing, the variables “contact the local authorities” and “receive help from local government” were highly related to one another ( $r = .87$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Out of 360 households, 232 heads of households (64 percent) contacted local officials and they received help from local authorities. This means that when local people asked for help from local authorities, the likelihood was that they would get help from public officials. As a result, local people in Me Linh district placed great trust in their local government. This would support the notion that trust in government/representative do feed into one another, especially because the coefficient correlation between “contact local government” and “getting help from local government” was greater than to these coefficients that were correlated with religious attendance and media usage ( $r = .16$  and  $r = .007$ , respectively). The relationship between trust in government/officials and most other features has been a subject of a critical debate from the viewpoint of social capital theory. According to that theory trust in institutions is fundamental in maintaining an effective relationship between government and citizens. As a result, the descriptive statistics on dimensions of community social capital were consistent with the model of correlation coefficient matrix.

What then did trust reflect in this case? Responses could easily reflect a varying mix of two concepts across individuals: how much trust one places in people who are not close friends or relatives and the frequency of encounters with such persons. People in transitional environments will communicate more with close friends and relatives than with strangers, compared with people in industrial advanced environments.

It is important to point out that in this study, contact with local officials is positive, but this does not necessary imply that the six communes studied, have a high degree of social capital in its more extensive connotation. Although we know that there is a strong correlation between these variables, the correlation by itself is not sufficient as an explanation, as long as we cannot explain what the causal mechanism involved. It was also hard for me to predict the correlation from questionnaires distributed to households, especially in a transitional society like Viet Nam where courtesy, deference and reticence are highly esteemed. Private problems of a domestic nature, or internal problems of a community, are not easy to find out from the household survey. In observing and reviewing data collected, I felt that most respondents were anxious to provide answers that they thought the interviewers wanted to hear. It would be easy to generate long lists of items that households may offer in response to what they seek for help from local authorities. For this research, it was important to find out what the foundation for maintaining trust among local people was, and why they continued to maintain their trust in each other and to place their trust in local public officers in their communal life.

I argued above that six communes in this study presented their rich associational life through their vibrant groups and associations. According to Putnam (1993), a rich associational life signifies a high degree of social capital in a community. For local

people in Me Linh district, participation in associations was important to their lives. Yet without a minimal level of trust among the individuals no associational life can emerge. The more people are part of such associational networks, it is argued, the more likely they are to play the role of active citizens.

My conversations with a focus group of villagers in Quang Minh commune during that field research provided their insightful opinions. The interviews conducted for this research focused on what the families themselves had been doing to escape poverty and what was holding them to maintain their trust in looking for support from the commune's leaders. I was quite surprised to hear their answers. In the interviews I conducted, local villagers in Quang Minh expressed the followings:

The commune leaders in my village know what it is like being poor, having no money. They've worked hard and they understand what happens down below in our households. They did pay attention to poor families. They launched campaigns, such as "*nhuong com se ao*" (give rice and share clothes) or "*la lanh dum la rach*" (full leaves help tattered leaves) in order to ask non-poor families help poor families.

(A farmer, 45 years old, Quang Minh Commune)

Commune leaders had concerns about their leadership capabilities. Although they have reached a certain educational level, several chairmen of cooperatives (*hop tac xa*) revealed that they felt they were "lacking managing knowledge". Even though most of them have at least a lower secondary education, they stated that they needed more education and skills. The chairman of Quang Minh People's Committee explained his situation:

Let me explain the situation of Quang Minh village. There are rice fields and factories located on our land. Before we used to live mainly on agriculture, now, there are other occupations and jobs brought in from the new foot-wear factory and house-ware factory. Our commune has been looking outward in recent years. This situation posed different challenges for me. For instance, what are my



leadership skills in maintaining good relationship with the factories' directors? How can I gather the support of the community when we have public works in our villages? I was uncertain about how to act in different situations. I need to gain more knowledge and skills in managing and monitoring and communication.

The president of women's union in Ngoc Thanh admitted:

I've just been elected as president of the women's group in my village. At the beginning I was very worried about this job. A lot of questions came to me, for example: How to get other women involved in the group? How can I coordinate micro-credit program fairly and equitably to women in my association? I took several training courses organized by the Vietnamese Women Union at the provincial level. How can I speak up my voice in a public meeting? Later on, the more I became involved, the more at ease I became.

The market economy, with its demands for higher skills and better product quality, has exerted a great impact on community leaders from many perspectives. The chairman of Hoang Kim village argued:

If you are not good enough, you should escape the stage. Of course, this is a high "devastating and fierce battle" of market competition to some degree, but we have to face the reality. We cannot be lazy or come back to the past-subsidized system with a stagnant status.

When I asked the president of the women's' union in Hoang Kim about her hope for the future, her reply reflected the three urgent aspirations that have been voiced through out my in-depth interviews: "get out of poverty, enhance our capacities, and make it possible for the children in my village to finish school."

Beyond issues of poverty, income generation, and production capacities, education and schooling are considered the top priority of the communes' agenda. Significantly, the social and economic transition taking place in Viet Nam in the 1990s is today reflected in changes in the ways in which people are defining their understanding

of the role of education and new productive skills. Although each commune has its own contextual situation, the principal of Quang Minh explained with his own reasoning:

There's something special about living in Quang Minh. We have some deep cultural traditions, and you can see for yourself when you're walking through our school, there are all kinds of voluntary activities from parents and students. Quang Minh's parents view that our school has created a social bond among parents. The culture of learning existed from generation to generation. As the principal of our school, I have to try my best to be a functional principal, a good manager, a good coordinator and a good communicator with the commune's leaders and villages' chiefs.

A parent echoed this view:

You know, we have had a life in such poverty and hardship; that is why we want our children to have a better life in the future. Our children can go and learn well in school if parents, teachers and community leaders are willing to engage themselves in the educational process.

In fact, we can find in Quang Minh commune and other surveyed villages opinions about their new issue-networks: a mixed community of traditional agriculture and new factories, and a wide school network from nursery classes to senior secondary school. Embedded in their understanding is pedagogy, a process of learning about mutuality that gets reinforced with every act of cooperation toward children's education and well-being in their villages. The relationship among the three components-- escape from poverty, connection, and participation—have profound and extensive implications for raising and maintaining trust in each other and investing in children's education.

In general, trust between members of the same group, caste, occupation, or class may result in strong bonds within group and community. Where there are high levels of interpersonal trust across sub-group boundaries, information may flow more freely, as this study demonstrates. Speaking one's mind about public affairs is usually

premised on the expectation that most reasonable people will accept the remarks without retribution, even if they disagree. The empirical evidence, though not always decisive, nevertheless points in the predicted direction. It demonstrates that trust is important for many forms of cooperation of people with the local government in Me Linh.

### **5.3 To what extent can the role of educational attainment of children be understood through the concept of community-based social capital?**

Six communes in this study have shown to some degree their commitment to the cause of education for community members, both adults and children. Interpretive data and statistical models suggested that community members not only viewed the important role of education for their children but also found appropriate ways and means to get involved in educational processes in their communities.

A factor analysis of community-based social capital variables was conducted in this study for two purposes. First, this kind of factor analysis would identify meaningful dimensions of community-based social capital; secondly, this analysis was part of a data reduction process to reduce the large number of social capital variables identified in the household survey (Bryant & Yarnold, 1995, p.108).

Factor analysis was employed to analyze the association among 12 variables that were related to community-based social capital (See the Tables 31-33). It aimed to identify groups of functionally interrelated variables that could be conceptually meaningful in describing public engagement, school connection, and media usage. Respondents were asked to indicate on a four- or five-point scale the importance of

public engagement, school connection and media usage. A Varimax orthogonal rotation was chosen to produce the factor loadings that were presented in Table 32.

Across all factor analytic procedures, principal components analysis was used. As a result of the analysis, five factors were extracted. These account for 68 percent of the variance. Table 31 contained the eigenvalue and percentage of explained variance for these five factors.

**Table 31: Eigenvalue and percentages of explained variance in five factors (based households' responses)**

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative % of Variance
1	2.224	18.531	18.531
2	2.009	16.744	35.275
3	1.414	11.781	47.056
4	1.397	11.641	58.697
5	1.062	8.849	67.645

Note: those eigenvalues that were 1.00 and more are presented.

At first glance, the number of factors derived from the process of factor analysis was rotated from original questionnaires.

Table 32 presented the rotated factor matrix for these five factors. Only those factor loadings which are 0.40 and more were presented.

**Table 32: Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix (Households' responses)**

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Contact local government	.963				
Receive help from local gov.	.958				
Election attendance				.638	.365
Membership				.526	
Clan/kinship as members		.511			
Trust in people			.730		
Group's activities			.871		
Involvement in school's activities			.719	.44	
Influence of clan on children's learning				.638	
Up-date on information					.608
Listen to radio		.814			
Read Newspaper		.702			

Note: Only those factor loadings that were .40 and more are presented.

The statistics in Table 32 showed that Factor 1 contained the following items “Have you ever contacted any government official for any need or problem?” and “Did you receive any help from local authorities ?” Factor 2 included “Do you listen to the radio? and “Do you read the newspaper?” Factor 3 included: “How is the membership?”; “Are the group's members the same kin or the same clan?” and “Are there more people that you can trust now?” Factor 4 included “Group’s activities”; “Does your group involve itself in any kind of activities for school?” and “Does the same clan influence learning and education of their clan children?” Finally, Factor 5 contained these questions: “Do you attend the election event?” and “Do you often receive local, national and international information?” Table 33 presents items and factor loading in an abbreviated form loaded on Factor 1, 2 ,3 , 4 and 5 individually



**Table 33: Items and factor loading**

No.	Item	Factor Loading
1	Contact local government	.963
2	Receive help from local gov.	.958
3	Election attendance	.814
4	Membership	.702
5	Clan/kinship as members	.526
6	Trust in people	.730
7	Group's activities	.871
8	Involvement in school's activities	.719
9	Influence of clan on children's learning	.638
10	Up-date on information	.608
11	Listen to radio	.814
12	Read Newspaper	.702

It must be noted that an item has several loadings on different factors and each loading is .40 or more. This item could be assigned to any of these factors depending on the characteristics of the particular factor. For example, the item “Does your group get involved in any kind of activities for school?” has loadings 0.719 and 0.44 on Factor 3 and Factor 4 respectively. It could be assigned either to Factor 3 or Factor 4, depending upon the characteristics of these two factors.

The next step was the labeling of the factors. Factor 1 could be represented by the terms of public interaction between local government and households in villages.

Because the characteristics of the question “Do you attend the election event?” (Belonging to Factor 4 with the loading 0.638) is more suitable for Factor 1, this question was assigned to Factor 1 in this study.

Factor 2 reflected use of the media. Question items deal with media usage through radio and newspaper to solicit people's channels of information, such as: “Do you listen to the radio?” and “Do you often read the newspaper?” Again, the question item: “Do

you often receive local, national and international news?” (which belongs to Factor 5) was more suitable for Factor 2, so this question was assigned accordingly..

Items in Factors 3 and 4 examined the strategies of cooperation with schools. Questions in these factors addressed the relationship between association activities and schools and the influence of clan/kinship on the learning of their children.

The results of factor analysis enabled me to calculate a mean score for three types of responses, i.e. public engagement, media usage and school connections. Table 34 showed that mean scores for public engagement, school connections and media usage were 0.85; 0.75 and 0.56 respectively. These statistics indicated that, in general, households in Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc province in Viet Nam, tended to look to public engagement (Mean= 0.85) and school’s connection (Mean=0.75) rather than media usage (Mean= 0.56).

**Table 34: Means and Standard Deviation for Households’ response to community-based social capital notion**

Labels	Mean	SD
Public Engagement	.85	.18
School Connection	.75	.10
Media Usage	.56	.34

Factor analytic procedures revealed the structure of community-based social capital and reduced the number of variables that were seen as indicators of social capital in communal life. Based on the result of the factor analysis above, there were three types of understanding of community-based social capital in this study in six villages of Me Linh district. Public engagement, school connection and media usage were considered important components in the community’s life in Me Linh.

Broad dimensions related to membership, associational activities, trust, media usage and support from local government emerged across different measures. In addition, I started to introduce the concept of social capital to community leaders, parents and teachers. During the in-depth interviews with households in six villages, I asked “What do you most need?” Almost inevitably the answer was either “More capital” or “More money”. More capital, i.e, means tangible items or more credit, refers to the most fungible resource that could enable households to do what they wanted. When school principals in six communes were asked the same question, four of them replied: “I need enough classrooms, more tables and chairs.” Only two principals interviewed included in their quest: “More books, teaching aids and qualified teachers.”

In the interview process, feelings of confusion and internal contradictions emerged. The concepts of “social capital” and “human resources” have some similarities. Most people thought that the two terms were interchangeable. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the concept of “social capital” has not been widely addressed in Vietnamese social science nor in Vietnamese society. Through our conversations with educators and parents, the term social capital was intended mostly as socialization of education based on social networks among teachers, parents and community members, which provided vital support to school. With few exceptions, most participants have understood social capital as being equal to human resources and the socialization of education. One participant reflected this socialization:

Socialization of education means the whole society gets involved in the educational system. Parents, community members together with teachers and school administrators join the effort to mobilize our children to go to school and remain in school. Love of learning is rooted in our society. Then, family is still a big responsibility for every child in this society. We invest money for our

children's schooling. This is our culture. I always put the education of my children as my priority.

The Director of the Provincial Education and Training Department (PETD) in Vinh Phuc province also felt that social capital is equated to the socialization of education.



Teacher Focus Group Interview in Quang Minh School

He provided an important insight about what he means by social capital:

I have a very broad conception of what social capital is. The way I look at it, social capital is one way of socializing education. Education cannot be seen as only the job of teachers and educational managers as many parents think, but it looks for a wide involvement on the part of the whole society. *Su nghiep giao duc la cua toan dan* (Education is the cause of the whole people) is the point of the departure that I often take. Since I've lived and worked here in Vinh Phuc for more than 20 years, I've seen how young people over the course of the last decade learn and organize differently. To me, we can fix issues such as school facilities or teacher training in a couple of years ahead with our joint efforts. However, the thing is how to engage students in long-term educational processes in their localities? The thing is that they are engaged in ways that the older generation consider unconventional. It's often a matter of getting involved in a concrete project, and then engaging oneself 100 percent in it for a short period, and then they stop. They don't participate in the long term. I often speak with teachers and community leaders about the challenges of *doi moi* and students' engagement.



## **Shared Values and Common Links**

Important to the formation of social capital was the existence of shared values and common links that unite the members of a community. Evidence was found in focus groups with parents and teachers suggesting that there was a common set of values held by parents in the sample, and that there was strong congruence of values between the parents and the school. Although it was more important to this study to determine the degree of value congruence within a community than to identify the values held within a community, it became apparent in the interviews that parents valued the education of their children, and community members were willing to get involved in the process.

Since communities in rural areas of Viet Nam were described as “tight”, it was important to understand what gives communities in this study their strength. One source of evidence indicated that there was a strong sense of agreement among parents and teachers. This agreement, identified in this study, showed community involvement in the education process. The village chief in the Quang Minh village said:

Primarily, I think there is more pride here. The kids are really proud of their school. Most of the parents in our community have found some way to help our schools. It was evident that parents often came to the parent-teacher conferences and they contribute to the school in many ways. Well, I think it's good because it shows that parents are interested. They do follow up and make sure that they are aware of what's going on in school.





“Socialization of education means the whole society gets involved in the education system. Parents, community members together with teachers and school administrators join efforts to mobilize our children to go to school and remain in school. Love of learning is rooted in our society.”

The formation of social capital was more likely within a community where community members interacted with each other on a sustained or regular basis. Most parents stated that they knew each other in the community and in school activities, such as cultural and sporting activities and fund-raising for school. Cultural and fund raising activities - both school and community-sponsored - were events that gave parents opportunities to know each other. This was mentioned by the principals, by parents in their focus group, and by teachers in their interviews, and was observed by the researcher.

Since the government has launched the campaign “the state and the people working together” (*nha nuoc va nhan dan cung lam*), many subsidy programs for

education have disappeared. This means that more of the costs are being shouldered by individual households. It is important to hear that people pay more attention to issues concerning the engagement of young people today. I believe that it is a crucial point in dealing with the relationship between social capital and education attainment. Obviously, educational attainment provides young people with human capital (knowledge and skills) and credentials, but also it endows people with sources of social capital--networks of friends and acquaintances built while in school.

In sum, the analyses of community-based social capital provide some evidence that membership, associational activities, and trust are vital in communal life in rural areas of Viet Nam. The descriptive and analytical results of the survey and in-depth interviews presented in the above section illuminated the way in which several dimensions of community social capital influence local people's ways of life. The results were consistent with the theory that social capital was thought of as a resource that gives people the ability to work together for common purposes (Coleman, 1990). The results from these analyses set a context for understanding family-based and education attainment in this survey site. The findings suggest that the broadening of democracy and access to information have opened and widened local people's understanding and their vision on *doi moi*, including educational processes. The factor analysis and interviews with focus groups and individuals indicated that mutual support and cooperation are vital means to help people escape poverty and build their generalized and interpersonal trust. The following section looked "inside" families to examine how family-based social capital interacts with children's educational attainment.

## CHAPTER 6

### FAMILY-BASED SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In Chapter One I outlined a comprehensive framework of social capital formation and its relations with educational attainment. According to this framework, any inquiry into the determinants of educational attainment must examine the internal dynamics of the family as well as broader social and cultural contexts. While Chapter Five advances our understanding of the dimensions of community-based social capital that influence educational development in local communities, these factors are only part of the picture. Therefore a key question remains:

*What are the main effects of financial, human and family-based social capital on children's educational attainment?*

This chapter used the household survey examine individual characteristics and family background factors as possible determinants of children's educational attainment, i.e. effects of financial, human, and family-based social capital on school attendance and learning outcomes. For each type of capital within the family, I use relevant independent variables to measure the main effect on the dependent variable. For instance, such variables as a house's roof, the number of children in a household, the family's ethnic origins and the income level are indicators of financial capital. The mother's education and father's attained levels of education and the parent's expectation for their children's education are indicators of human capital. Variables of parent- child interaction, homework help, parent-teacher conference attendance and involvement in tutoring

classes were indicators of family based social capital. This chapter addresses the question:

What is the linkage of financial, human and family-based social capital with children educational attainment?

In Me Linh district, the activities of six villages surrounding their communities and schools showed an effective communal and family life. While it was not easy at first to map family life in each village, field research yielded much more using household surveys of 360 families along with in-depth-interviews and focus group discussions. My main purpose was to find out how villagers help their children attend and stay in school and how they influence their children's learning outcomes. Research studies on financial and human capital present evidence of correlations to children's educational attainment. According to Coleman (1988, 1990), family social capital variables are a powerful factor in children's educational attainment. Coleman states:

What I mean by social capital in the raising of children is the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up. Social capital exists within the family, but also outside the family, in the community... in the interest, even the intrusiveness, of one adult in the activities of someone else's child. (Coleman, 1990, p. 334)

Various operationalizations of social capital have been used, resulting in an attempt to interpret and understand the significance of this concept for development. Research has generally supported Coleman's hypothesis that social capital from the family is related to children's human capital production. I mentioned in Chapter Two that the social capital literature has not specifically addressed the role of family social capital in developing countries. Therefore, I am deeply interested in finding out about family-based social capital and whether the engagements among villagers merit the level of



children's educational attainment in Me Linh district of Viet Nam. As in Chapter Three I provide a reflection of a Vietnamese family as a unit of a community, particularly in the rural setting; in this section I empirically analyze how parents and children relate to each other in the learning process and what parents see as solutions for their children's educational attainment.

Educational decisions are conditioned by factors within the family and factors external to it. As I explained in Chapter Three, the structure of the educational system in Viet Nam has changed due to the *doi moi* process. Various aspects of educational participation may figure into family-level decision making. Certainly if schools are not available, or children must walk long distances to school, families may reconsider their decisions to educate their children. If schools are nearby but perceived by parents and children to be of poor quality, families may decide that the questionable benefits of low quality education are not worth the expense.

The labor market in Vietnamese rural settings may shape or constrain family schooling decisions by providing both immediate opportunities for child labor and long-term economic opportunities. One prevalent assumption is that, in developing countries, children are not enrolled in schools and are instead engaged in productive activities in the home or labor market because families cannot afford the cost of children's schooling. This assumption has not been systematically examined in Viet Nam. This was, in fact, one rationale for a main focus of this section: to investigate the role of family resources in determining children's educational attainment.



## 6.1 What factors determine whether or not a child regularly attends school?

This section examines the relation between investments of social, financial and human capital in children and their production of human capital. The survey of households in six villages of Me Linh district produced data for 360 households and 360 school-age children.

I conducted a logistic regression using maximum likelihood to examine the determinants of school attendance. Logistic regression analysis is appropriate when one is interested in assessing the effects of independent variables on a dichotomous dependent variable (Jaccard, 2001, p.3). Consequently, the dependent variable of interest was converted into a series of dummy variables. In all the analyses of this section, the dependent variable was dichotomous in nature, e.g., a child is either attending school regularly or not doing so, or a child has dropped out of school or not done so. The results of the logistic analysis can be interpreted much like those for multiple regression analysis. Positive and negative signs for the coefficients indicated the direction of change in the dependent variable. The logistic coefficient indicated a change in the log odd of one outcome versus another, given a one-unit change in the independent variable. In addition to recording the logistic coefficient, I included the change ratio in the odds associated with a one-unit change in the independent variable in second the column for model testing<sup>9</sup>.

Table 35 examined the determinants of school attendance for children ages 10-18. In this table, while the coefficient of the family income variable was positive and significant, its odds ratio is declined ( $\beta = 4.17$ ,  $p < .05$ , odds ratio = 0.13). This suggests

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<sup>9</sup> According to Jaccard (2001, p. 3), most researchers while using logistic regression, rely on the concept of odds to relate theoretical meaning on the results of the analysis

that while family income is important, it may not play a decisive role in children's school attendance. The father's and the mother's educational background have a big effect on school attendance. Particularly, with every unit increase in the mother's education, the odds that her child attends school increase by a ratio of 3.9. With every unit increase in the father's education, the odds that his child attends school increase by a ratio of 2.3. Parent-child interactions about school matters has the largest effect (odd ratio = 6.3) on children's school attendance. The odds ratio for parent-child interaction shows that parents who keep daily communication with children about school work help these children stay in school regularly and make them more likely to complete the junior secondary education level. The same bivariate logistic regression was run with homework help. The coefficient value of this variable was marginally significant; the odds value of homework help is very small (odds ratio = 0.77).

When parents attend teacher-parent conferences, this appears to be a helpful factor in maintaining children in school. In other words, parental involvement appeared to limit children's absence from school (odds ratio = 2.4). This finding implied that better conducting of parent-teacher conferences would be associated with an avoidance of children absence. For every unit of change in the parent-teacher conference, children were attending school on a regular daily basis. It also suggests that parents may allow children to stay in school even during crop-seasons in rural areas.

Variables on voluntary contributions by parents to school funds either in kind or in cash are relatively strong predictor for children's school attendance, with an odds ratio equal to 2.04. This supports the notion that parents' contribution was important for a school's wide activities.

Variables of parents knowing other parents were considered a proxy variable between community social capital and family social capital. As the proxy variable, the bivariate analysis showed that this variable used to social capital was significantly related to children's school attendance. However, the odds value of this variable was equal to 1. This means it did not matter whether parents knew other parents or not; their children were still attending school. It might suggest that social capital research has yet to define precisely what is included in the measurement of social capital. Nevertheless, it was useful to mention associations of this variable to children school's attendance as a proxy variable. Table 35 shows the logistic regression for school attendance in junior schools in 6 communes in Me Linh district.

**Table 35: Logistic Regression for School Attendance in Junior Schools, ages 10-18 (N=360)**

Independent Variables	Parameter Estimates	Odd ratios	Standard Error	Wald
Ethnicity	-3.9	-.077	2.215	3.255
Number of children	-.71	-.67	.852	.693
House Roof	1.56	.2	1.130	1.919
Family Income	4.61*	.013	1.846	6.236
Father's Education	.53	2.3	1.352	.158
Mother's Education	.26	3.9	1.019	.067
Parent-Child Interaction	.30	6.2	1.719	.024
Homework Help at Home	3.40*	.077	1.76	3.60
Attend at Parent-Teacher Conference	.56	2.4	1.051	.179
Voluntary Contribution for School	.44	2.04	1.891	.031
Parents know other parents	1.277	1.00	1.872	.465
Textbook & School Supply	2.42	0.23	1.834	1.743
Transportation Mean to School	.77	0.28	.628	1.509
Constant	-10.644		51.817	.042
-2 Log likelihood	31.862			
X <sup>2</sup> square ( p= .005)	35.538			

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001, one-tailed

The above findings confirm that a family's background and resources are fundamental to children's school attendance. Parent-child interaction about school matters plays a crucial role in motivating children to stay in school and is a considerable resource for children to further their education. The mother's education as well as the father's education has a positive effect on children's school attendance. Because of their own experience with education, educated parents are more aware of its benefits and they may orient their children to finish at least their lower secondary education.



**Students at the Phuc Yen School**



### **Parents' Involvement: a bond between school and parents**

As social capital formation is dependent upon the strength of a community and its members, it is important to determine what holds community together. Since rural communities in Viet Nam were described as “tight” communities, it is important to understand what gives the community its strength. One source of interpretive evidence is that there is a strong sense of agreement in the values held by parents from the focus group as well as in individual interviews. Parents agreed that their investment in education for their children had long term benefits for both children and families. What linked or bonded the participants together was their active participation in the community. When participants who shared the same values fulfilled their roles in the schools, they became a community linked together. Thus, the links were nurtured by parents' involvement, i.e. parents participating in the school community by contributing either cash or in kind, and by attending and supporting the activities of the schools.

During our interviews, both parents and teachers spoke about school activities that are available for parents to get involved with the school, and the value of that interaction. One parent in Ngoc Thanh village explained that teachers often paid visits to children's homes and asked parents to help at several school activities. One parent in Quang Minh told of how he thought parent involvement made an important difference in the school. He said that when more parents were involved, “it just seemed like more of a family atmosphere, for teachers, the kids, for every one.” A principal in Tien Chau village explained:

Parents interact and know each other because they do fund-raisers together, or they do other things for the school so that they end up doing social things together. So they pretty well know each other to some extent.



One teacher in Quang Minh village said that parent involvement makes a dramatic difference in the school. Another said, “That’s what makes the school.” The level of parent involvement was addressed by several in interviews. In the focus group interview for teachers, one teacher stated:

People are volunteering here constantly, you know. I mean there are parents when the school needs their help. The parents are around all the time. They’re very active.

The principals in Quang Minh, Phuc Yen, and Tien Chau stated “We couldn’t live without parents helping”. Although these comments and data from the parent survey indicated that a large number of parents were involved in the school, not all parents were involved. One female teacher in Hoang Kim stated, “I think we have both extremes. You have parents... that are overwhelmingly involved, and you have some that have less contact with the school.”

Community members saw both value and potential problems with parents-to-parents interaction. The benefits included socialization with each other, parents could know their child’s friends’ parents, and they could learn from each other about their own children. In question 30, eighty six percent of the parents agreed or strongly agreed that it is important for parents to socialize during school activities. This socialization is worthwhile and to some degree parents exchanged information about their children with each other.

When parents know the parents of their children’s friends, several forms of social capital can be formed. Parents who know other parents and trust them will allow their children to form friendships. Parents would also expect to share information with each other, especially if they see a potential problem developing in the other’s child. They

would also be expected to enforce the norms of the community even with each other's children. The parent questionnaire and the focus group and interview data gave indications that there was a high degree of closure in the social network found in each community of the study villages. The data showed that parents knew each other and often formed lasting friendships with each other. Furthermore, because they did know each other, they expressed a high level of trust, exchanged information with each other, and acted to enforce the community norms with each other's children. A large percentage of parents indicated they knew a large number of other school families. Several parents in their interviews or focus group emphasized the value of this closure in the school community. One parent explained that since several other parents had known each other through their communication, she often called other parents to check out information or to see where other parents stood on parental issues. In part she said:

One obvious benefit to me is just helping each other out. I think it's also been extremely helpful for me going through having other parents to touch bases with when some parents are struggling with parenting issues, and may be some offer them some sort of advice.

In summary, the empirical findings showed that the factors that determine school attendance are not based on the financial and wealth resources of the family. The crucial factors to maintaining children in school are their parents' educational background and parent-child interaction. Along with their voluntary contribution to school funds, attendance at parent-teacher conferences, and parents knowing other parents, the findings indicated that educated parents are more likely to value education for their children and will go to greater efforts to maintain them in school. Importantly, these empirical findings were closely related to interpretive data found through in-depth interviews and

focus group interviews with parents and community members. The similarity of the results provided strong evidence for the research questions that regardless of wealth, parents' educational background and family social capital dimensions (parent-child interaction, homework help, voluntary support and parent-parent relations) are crucial factors for children's attendance in school.

## **6.2 To what extent are children's learning outcomes associated with financial, and human capital within family?**

Moving beyond school attendance, I examine whether children's learning outcomes are associated with financial and human capital within the family. In other words, what are the relations between financial, human and social capital within a family that have an effect on children's learning outcomes in this study? As one examines the family in general, we must ask ourselves: what are some of the variables that can influence a child's learning outcomes?

Although this study was not meant to extensively examine the variables related to financial capital and human capital, several variables related to family background have been used in the general lineal model analysis in predicting student educational attainment. These include parents' education and household income level.

The survey in six villages of Me Linh district produced data for 360 households and 360 school age children (from 10-18 years). In this study, I have used the measure of educational attainment, a composite score based on the grade point average score (GPA) in subject matter areas. Though this measure can be insufficient, it was expected to reveal more fully how educational attainment is influenced by family social capital.

As the effect of three factors (financial, human and social capital) on student attainment was examined, it should be remembered that these factors were themselves scales of other variables. If a factor had a significant effect on student achievement, which among the variables of the scale contributed to this effect? A test of these levels of financial, human and social capital within the family is discussed below. This process

builds upon the general linear model, i.e. a univariate analysis or three way ANOVA to examine the determinants of students' attainment. This analysis of variance, according to Fox (1997, p.186), provides results similar to an additive multiple regression. This analysis was appropriate to test the significance of main effects and interaction of one or more categorical independent variables on one continuous dependent variable. In this case, the analysis highlights the relationships involved in predicting different types of parents' contact with school, and family interaction, with all financial and human capital variables finally regressed on student attainment.

Several measures were used to determine which set of variables most effectively predicts the value of the dependent variables. A summary table of effect estimates for financial, human capital, family interaction, parent - initiated contact with school, as well as for the dependent variable, GPA score, helped clarify the relationships among the variables.

The relations among measures of financial, human, and social capital were examined. Though each model differs somewhat from the others, I found a striking overall consistency in the direction and magnitude of the independent variables' estimates; with only a few exceptions, the findings were as expected. The results described below show that many variables are important in predicting educational attainment. The results showed that family background characteristics have important influences on educational achievement.



## **Financial Capital Indicators as Predictors of Student Achievement**

Financial capital is measured by family income. Measures of family income are commonly included as independent variables in analyses of educational outcomes, with the assumption that children from wealthier families will have greater access and opportunities for education. Given the increasing cost of education in Viet Nam, I anticipated the household's economic status to be a strong predictor of educational achievement. Even at the primary education level, where education is technically free to all children, schooling is an expensive endeavor. Parents must pay for textbooks and school supplies. They must make annual contributions to the school's building fund and to different kinds of fees. It is not surprising that various studies have found Vietnamese households devoting an average of 9.8 percent of their budget to education (Bhushan, *et al*, 2001, p. 77).

Precise data on family income is not easily obtained in developing countries. Since Viet Nam has developed indicators measuring the poverty line, I was able to obtain useful data on the income levels of 360 households during the household survey in six study villages of Me Linh district. Questions 6 to 13 in the survey are devoted to investigating the family income levels and wealth status. Households were aware of their household income and they reported their income level either in cash or in the amount of rice yielded. In addition to a specific question on household income, I collected data on the wealth and status of the family, for instance, data on the structural characteristics of houses (including the types of roofing materials) and other assets. Field observation and the investigation of cross tabulation results indicate that the brick-roof house is a good proxy measure for middle-income households, while cement or beton sheet roofs are

good proxies for high socio-economic status. For the cases in the sample, the presence of a beton sheet roof highly correlates to high income level.

In the model testing, family income generally has no effect on the GPA score. The effect of income level was diminished in the analysis of GPA score. This indicator has the F value at 1.042,  $\beta = -1.93$  and  $p = .154$ . Even the middle income family showed no effect on the composite score. However, the measure of ethnicity displayed a substantial association with students' achievement (GPA score). As shown in the Table 36, the magnitude of the F value was significant ( $F = 6.623$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The data testing showed that students can be able to learn well in school. This means that students from any ethnic groups were able to complete at least their junior secondary education. The total variance for this model testing of Financial Capital (FINCAP) accounted for 18 percent.

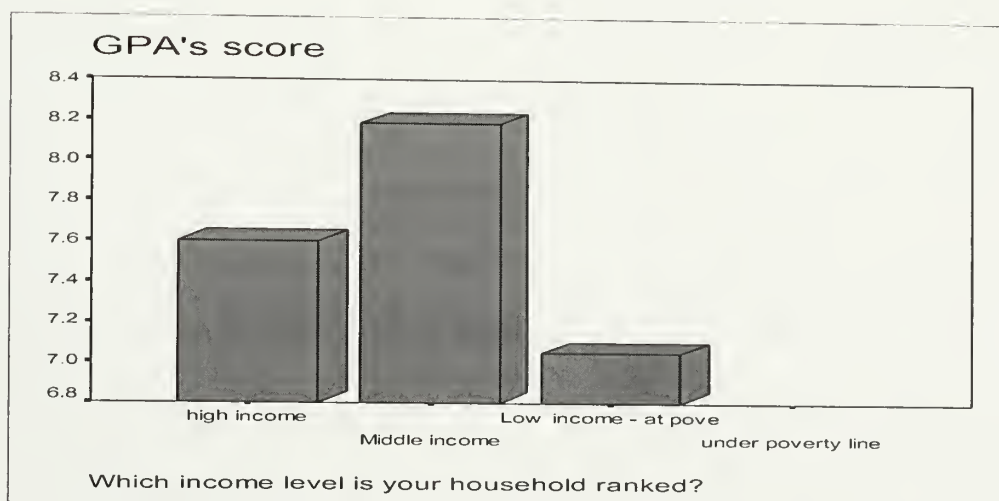
**Table 36: Three-Way ANOVA Analysis of Financial Capital (FinCap) on composite GPA score**

Variables	Beta	Standard Error	F value
Sibling	.812	2.108	.835
Ethnicity	.847	1.726	6.623*
House roof	1.897	1.668	.894
Family Income	-1.931	1.177	1.764
R <sup>2</sup>	.287		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.18		
N = 359			
Missing case: 1			

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

This result was very interesting and it was not aligned with different research studies claiming that the family's financial capital is a good predictor for students' attainment. This finding in this study implied that a family's financial capital does not play an important role in determining GPA scores. The data from Figure 8 shows that children from middle income families have a better average GPA score than children from higher income or low income families. It may explain why most families claim that their family incomes have reached middle level. It suggests that more families have escaped from poverty due to profound changes brought about by the *doi moi* process. See Figure 10 below.

**Figure 10** Financial Capital Indicator on Educational Achievement



The expectation for financial help is related to the household's financial situation. Parents from 345, or 96 percent, of households indicated that they expect future financial help from their children in their old age. Only 13 households, or four percent, indicated their preference for non-financial help from their children in old age. This shows that the

expectation for financial help from children taps into parents' perception of future labor market opportunities for their children. If parents perceive their children's schooling as the primary route to future economic security (for themselves and their children), they will go to great lengths to keep their children in school

### **Human Capital Indicators as Predictors of Student Educational Attainment**

Various family-level factors are likely to affect children's educational experiences. In this part of the analysis, I examined human capital indicators to determine which variables are meaningful in predicting student achievement, controlling for other variables of the same set.

The mother's and father's education levels have been chosen as a proxy to control for parental human capital. To measure the effect of the mother's and father's educational background, I included variables, coded one to seven, indicating the father's and mother's highest level of education completed. Both parents' education should have a positive effect on the children's educational attainment and development. Through their own experience with education, educated parents should be more aware of the its benefits. They should be more likely to ensure that their own children have the chance to realize these benefits. Parents' perception about the value of education and future expectations of their children may make important differences in children's school experiences.

The father's and mother's education, and the measure of parents' perceptions about the value of education, have been used as independent variables. While the survey asked about the educational background of the head of the household, husbands know the educational background of their spouse and vice versa. The survey data revealed that the

mean educational level of fathers was 4.29, and that the standard deviation was .96. The mean of educational level of mothers was 3.94, and the standard deviation was .92. This means that the average educational level of both fathers and mothers is at junior secondary school (See Table 19 for more detailed information). The model in Table 37 presents the results of the univariate general model testing of human capital variable on the GPA score.

**Table 37: Three- way ANOVA Analysis of Human Capital (HumCap) on composite GPA score**

Variables	Beta	Standard Error	F value
Mother's Education	4.62	2.42	2.048**
Father's Education	2.94	1.97	2.010*
Expectation of parentsfor children's education	2.00	1.10	1.710*
R <sup>2</sup>	.437		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.24		
N = 359			
Missing case: 1			

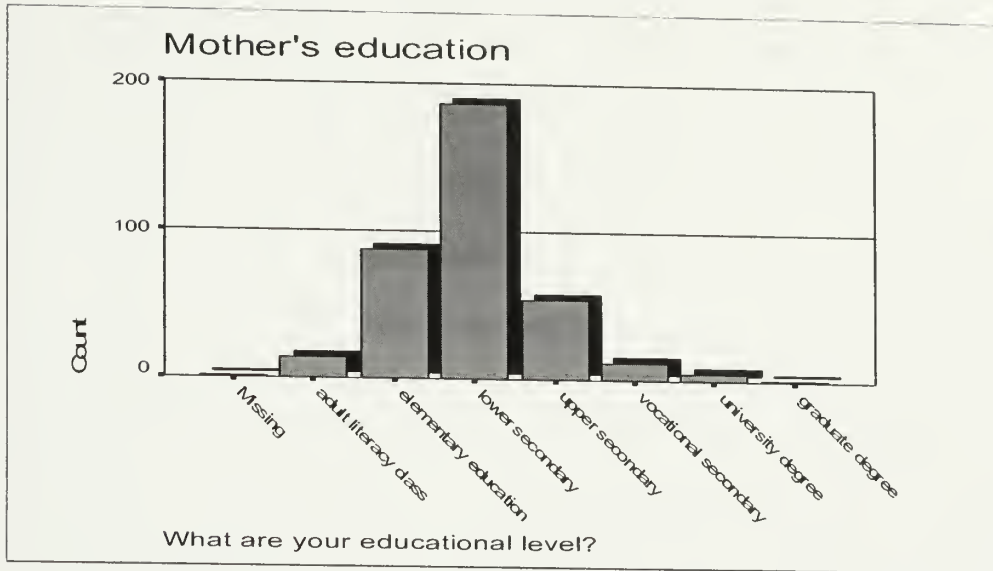
\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

The relationship between GPA score and mother's and father's education is significant from elementary to college levels (F=2.048,  $\beta$ = 4.62 p< .01, and F = 2.01,  $\beta$ = 2.94, p<.05, respectively). This means the mother's educational level as well as the father's educational level have a significant effect on children's educational attainment.



The relationship between GPA score and parents' perception about the values of children's education is statistically significant at the marginal  $F= 1.710$ ,  $\beta= 2.00$  and  $p< .05$  level. It assumes that parents' perception about the value of education is a good motivation source for their children to complete at least their basic education and go beyond. It suggests that the father's and mother's education and parents' perception about the value of education have more significant influence on students' achievement than the family's wealth and income level. Although most students' parents were not well to do, it appeared that they understood the important role of education for their children. The fact is that from the household's survey, 57 percent of fathers and 52 percent of mothers claimed that they had attained education levels somewhere equal to junior secondary education and 8 percent of parents indicated that they were taking adult literacy classes. There were virtually no illiterate parents in this household survey. The total variance accounted for was adjusted R square = .24. The mother's educational background was a strong and significant predictor of children's achievement. See Figure 11 below about the mother's education level.

**Figure 11: Mother's educational level**



In model testing, the mother's and father's educational background has a significant positive effect on a student's achievement. With every unit increase in the educational level of the mother and father, the composite GPA scores of their children are likely to increase 24 percent.

The measures that tap into parents' perceptions of future employment opportunities and the link between education and the labor market present a good predictor of educational attainment. If parents perceive their children's schooling as the primary route to future economic opportunities, they will motivate and help their children finish their basic education. On other hand, when parents doubt the value of education for securing future economic opportunities, or feel that the costs of education are simply too high given the slim chances of securing a job in the future, they may decide to forgo schooling for their children beyond the early years of primary school.

## **Rising Challenges for Families**

Through my face-to face interaction with parents, I found a common sentiment among parents that their children ought to learn more and be successful in school.

Parents were not driven by a sense of duty, but they understood the crucial role of education for their children in the future. A woman in Hoang Kim said:

Although my family is still poor, I always consider education very important for my children. If my son and my daughter finish their general education level, they will go on to college or vocational school and I hope that they will have a better life than me.

On the other hand, some parents raised concerns about career opportunities for their children when they graduate from secondary school. One father expressed his doubt:

I'm not sure whether my children can get a job after their graduation from secondary school. I have seen children of my neighbors who graduated from the agricultural colleges, but didn't get jobs, and they returned home to wait for other opportunities. It's a waste of time and no immediate benefit for themselves and for their families.

In fact, his ideas evoked a debate among parents in this focus group interview.

Many parents talked about the limitations of the job market in rural areas, as the country has embraced a market - oriented economy for more than a decade. They were concerned that the central government has placed more emphasis on urban areas than rural areas. As a result, a number of youths have migrated from rural areas to cities and towns for employment. The collaborative research study of the University of British Columbia and Viet Nam's NCSSH (Boothroyd & Pham, 2001, p.22) documented severe underemployment in rural areas of Viet Nam. The survey indicates "many obstacles were found in the way of expansion of small industry and handicraft jobs, especially the deficiency in funds, knowledge, skills and the uncertainty of market" (p.23).

Although most parents recognized the vital role of education for their children, they felt that their own educational background may not help their children in terms of school academic work. A father revealed his ideas:

Even though I got a certificate from the junior education school, sometimes, I was stuck when my daughter asked me several questions on her school work. I mean what children learn today from their school may be very different from my generation. We see clearly that our children have more advantages than our generation because they are living in peace time and *doi moi*, but they also have faced some big challenges we did not have to face. For example, in my time, there weren't many schools available and there was a severe shortage of teachers. We didn't have to pay school fees because of a subsidized system, and in that system, we could not have many things we needed but we also did not have to struggle so much. At present, it is not far to go to school because schools are close and available, and we have many different types of schools. However, we have to pay school fees for our children. If they are not doing well in school, they cannot go on to senior secondary school. Yes, our younger generation has better conditions than any other past generation, but the competition in entrance exams to senior education school and to colleges also creates difficulties for poor families. There are a number of children from poor families, who are not able to complete junior secondary education and further their education to higher level of education system. Education leaders and the government should think about this inequality between non-poor families and poor families.

My analysis of my participants' perspectives on education and school in Me Linh revealed that families in rural areas are gradually adapting themselves to the new pressures and opportunities brought about by the *doi moi* process. Rapid economic changes drive social change which in turn can dramatically change the prevailing situation and key choices facing families. The opening of different types of schools and access to educational resources, as well as changes taking place in the community and at home, have widened parents' understanding and their choices for their children's school. Children cannot only learn in public schools, but also can have access to semi-public, boarding schools and people-founded community schools.

While many participants acknowledge positive changes in education due to the *doi moi* process, some parents claimed the opposite, namely that there were “negative points of *doi moi*, such as the wide gap between rich and poor classes, and the increase in criminal cases and prostitutes.” Poverty is always a daunting challenge for poor families in supporting their children’s school participation. One parent in Hoang Kim village claimed:

It’s really tough for children from poor families because their families don’t have enough money to pay different kinds of school fees, such as, fees for school maintenance, school construction fund, money for school uniform. In addition, they have to buy textbooks and other school supplies. Textbooks are expensive and school doesn’t have a library for students to borrow books. If we can’t give our children money to buy textbooks, they won’t pass the grade.

A widow joined in:

My kids dropped out of classes because I cannot afford all school expenses. I wish my kids could go back to school, but school expenses for one child are more costly than before. I estimate that money amount to be covered for a child’s schooling in one semester is equal to a big pig. If schools have some sort of scholarship for them or cut or reduce all kinds of different fees for children from poor families, my kids can finish secondary education or apply to vocational schools.

When I visited a family in Tien Chau village, a 12 year-old girl said:

I raised hen and ducks to get money for my schooling. Every year, I have to pay fees for school construction, maintenance and I have to buy text books. Even my siblings help me buy books, I need to have money to buy a school uniform. Many of my friends raise hens and poultry in order to buy school supplies, although some of my classmates receive money from their parents.

Textbooks and uniforms are an issue for poor families. The higher cost of secondary education imposes obstacles to poor children continuing at school. If they drop out of secondary school, they have little hope to access non-traditional vocational



training. Some poor families may feel that they have no choice but to keep their children at home as they are vital to the household economy, working domestic chores, tending to younger siblings or farm animals, fetching fuel wood, water and forage, and helping in field work.

In general, educational attainment and literacy rate among Vietnamese people are remarkable as Viet Nam's officially reported literacy rate is close to 90 percent and universal primary education has been achieved in the year 2000 ( UNDP, 2001). In this study, parents' educational background and parents' expectation for children's education are fundamental to their children's educational attainment. *Doi moi* has brought new changes in the education system and opened many choices for parents and children. However, the gap between rich and poor families is wider, and there are many obstacles for poor children in rural areas to further their secondary education. If there are no appropriate solutions, this problem creates an inequality between the poor and non-poor households. Before summarizing the key findings and discussing the above aspects more fully in the last chapter as implications, it is useful to consider the impact of family social capital on educational attainment in the next section.

### **6.3 What is the effect of family social capital on educational attainment**

After such model testing on financial and human capital, the question arises whether family social capital affects student attainment: Are family social capital indicators significantly related to GPA scores? If they are, which one plays a more important role in predicting students' educational attainment? I examine the relationships of family-based social capital and students' educational achievement. What happens to

those factors when one uses the GPA score to test the main hypothesis, which was as follows?

***Main Hypothesis: Family Social Capital has an independent and significant effect on educational achievement.***

The univariate analysis of family social capital indicators on student attainment is shown in Table 38. In this table, the data shows the F values and the beta coefficients of student educational attainment and the following social capital indicators: parent-child interaction, homework help from parents, sibling and relatives, parent-teacher conferences attendance, voluntary contribution to school's fund and input of parents for children to taking tutoring classes. As shown in Table 38, three variables – parent-child interaction, getting help on home work and parent-teacher conference attendance – display moderate magnitudes for better GPA scores. In this model testing, the values for parent-child interaction show a moderate association with GPA score,  $F = 2.788$ ,  $\beta = 9.287$ ,  $p < .05$ . The model testing also shows a notable and visible association between parent-child interactions and children's academic achievement. In the univariate model on family social capital, the F value associated with homework help either from parents or siblings is substantial at  $F = 2.178$ ,  $\beta = 4.441$ ,  $p < .05$ . The results confirm that family-based social capital measuring parent-child interaction and getting help for homework are not only crucial to children's participation in school, but also to children's learning achievement. They are important and independent factors in this investigation.

**Table 38: Three-Way ANOVA Analysis of Family Social Capital on composite GPA scores**

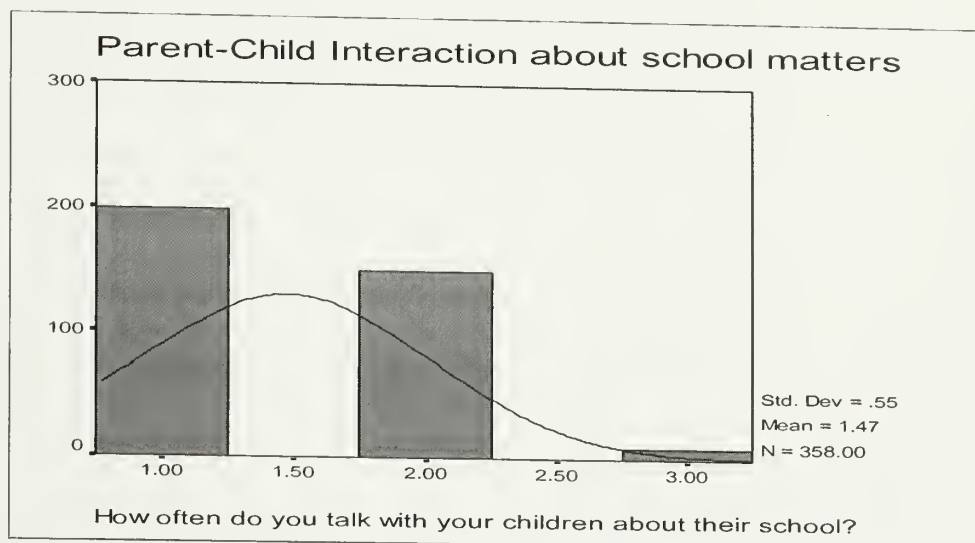
Variables	Beta	Standard Error	F Value
Parent-Child Interaction	9.287	10.917	2.788*
Homework help	4.441	9.821	2.178*
Attendance at Parent-Teacher Conference	4.019	6.759	1.704*
Voluntary Support for School's Fund	1.217	7.89	2.134*
Support for taking tutoring classes	6.023	3.161	1.333
R <sup>2</sup>	0.626		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.26		

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001,  
N= 358, missing cases: 2

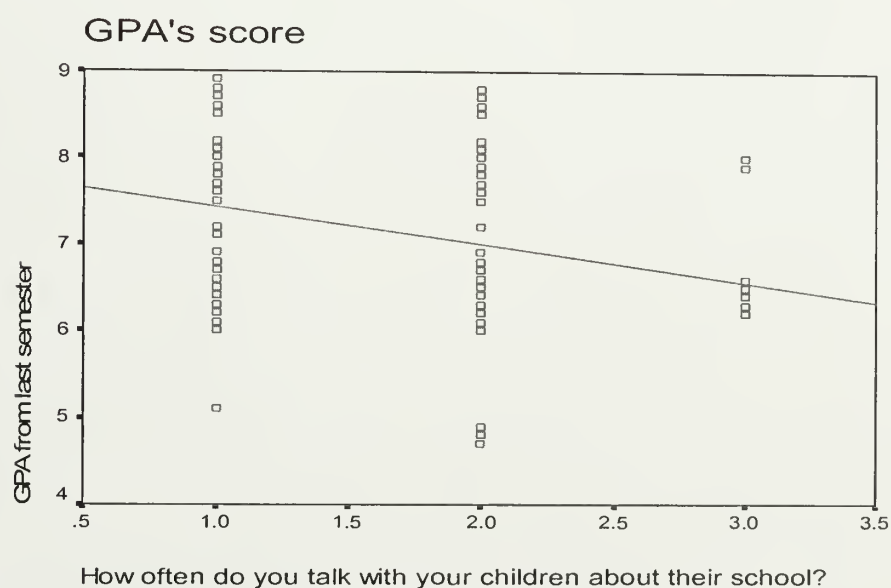
In addition, parents attending parent-teacher conference and providing voluntary support for the school's fund is also important sources to motivate student to learn and be successful in school ( $F= 1.074$ ,  $\beta= 4.01$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $F= 2.134$ ,  $\beta= 1.217$ ,  $p<.05$ , respectively). In the model taking tutoring classes as one family-social capital indicator is not a strong predictor for educational attainment ( $F= 1.333$ ,  $\beta=6.033$ ). It suggests that taking tutoring classes means those parents have to pay extra money for either school-based tutoring or private tutoring classes. A more-in-depth research study is needed to examine the impacts and effects of taking tutoring classes.

While Figure 12 describes the frequency and histogram for parent-child interaction, Figure 13 demonstrates the effect of parent-child interaction on GPA scores through the scatter plot chart.

**Figure 12. Frequency and histogram about parent-child interaction on school matters**



**Figure 13: The scatter plot about the effect of parent-child interaction on GPA's score**



(Note: scale from 1 to 5: 1= most often, 2 = often, 3 = same, 4= less often, 5= none)

The total variances of family social capital are significant in the overall model (the Adjusted R squared value for GPA score is 0.26)

The univariate model estimates for the analysis of family social capital suggest that the interaction between parent and children on learning, including homework help, is an influential factor in predicting students' educational attainment. Clearly, family social capital is a substantial predictor in comparison with variables associated with financial and human capital. As indicated in Tables 36-38, financial, human, and social capital factors independently affected student achievement measured by GPA composite scores. Among these independent variables, social capital in term of parent-children interaction and helping children with their homework are correlated with student educational attainment together with variables on human capital. The F values for social and human capital are of about the same magnitudes across outcomes, which is not surprising considering that the outcomes are closely related, both conceptually and empirically. But the financial capital indicator is less significant in the estimates of this univariate general linear model.

### **Voluntary Contribution and Education Cost**

Important to the formation of social capital is the face-to-face interaction of people within families and social networks (Coleman, 1994; Putnam, 1993). This was where, according to the theory, social capital is expected to be formed, and therefore it is important to this study. There is evidence of large amounts of interaction between parents and schools and the concerns that parents provide to school in this study. After doing twenty four interviews, I realized that I was getting essentially the same ideas from



parents over and over. My questions and our discussions evoked their thoughts and feelings, as well as their reaction to education system.

The parents with whom I conducted further interviews talked about their voluntary contribution for school. For instance, parents in Tien Chau village played a part in making a brick building for the school on its new premises. People donated one or two sacks of paddy to pay for the school labor, and the school organized various charity shows and sent the proceeds to meet construction expenses. Such voluntary services are worth mentioning not merely because they helped construct the school building, but also they because the local society became engaged in a significant way.

The parents' participation in the school's building, in fact, evoked a sense of belonging to and pride in the school, as well as an interest in its welfare. Thus, parents and villagers looked at the school as their entitlement on account of their collective contribution.

Despite the voluntary contribution of parents to schools, parents are responsible for many supplementary levies to cover classroom materials and a share of the school building and maintenance costs, as well as having to supply their own child's needs for notebooks, textbooks, uniforms, and other supplies. The Education Law in Viet Nam stipulates that grade 1-5 should be available free to all children. Several categories of secondary school students are also exempt from fees in junior grades (6-9), and in senior grades (10-12). Eligible categories include children of deceased or seriously wounded soldiers, children with disabilities, children residing in mountainous or remote areas, and ethnic minority children. Children from poor families, with certificates from local officials can be exempted from 50 percent of tuition fees.

Despite these provisions, school tuition fees are still burdensome for poor parents in rural areas. The joint study between the Asian Development Bank and the Ministry of Labor, Invalid and Social Affairs of Viet Nam (2001, p. 78) points out that education is one of major expenses for poor families. The burden of educational expenses on poor families has raised a big concern in the central and local governments. In addition to the framework of support policies from the central government, local governments have developed their programs to help poor families. The chairman of the People's Committee in Me Linh district confirmed:

Our Government is currently paying more attention to the education of poor children. For the coming school year, the People Committee in Me Linh has a plan to distribute textbooks for poor children. We are seeking scholarships for them too. There are many ways to do this. For instance, we can request donations from enterprises and industrial factories that are located in our district area. Although we've launched the campaign "government and people join efforts for children's education" (*nha nuoc va nhan dan cung lam giao duc*), this does not mean that the government puts all the pressure on local people to take care of children's education. We have to find ways and means to help poor children too so that they can have access to secondary education and complete their basic education.

In summary, the education system in Viet Nam during *doi moi process* has undergone profound changes. It includes a diversity of school types and a wide choice of schools for children. The demand for education is on the rise because of the impact of a market economy in which it looks for a skilled labor force equipped with at least basic education. While secondary education is almost always necessary for children to complete their basic education, it is no longer a free system. Vietnamese families consider these factors of education and future employment opportunities in their educational decisions and their support for their children's schooling. Parents' educational background and family-social capital are crucial for their children's

educational attainment. In the race up the higher ladder of the education system, poor families may forgo higher education for children completely as the costs of education stretch far beyond their means.

The remainder of this chapter examines the linkage of family, human and social capital within families in determining differences in educational attainment through the model testing of univariate linear models both in the main effects and interaction terms of these variables.

#### **6.4 To what extent are the levels of reported Social Capital associated with Human and Financial Capital?**

Once indicators of social, human and financial capital have been created, it is possible to address possible linkages among these constructs. Interrelations among social, human, and financial variables were examined through their interaction terms. Univariate general analysis then was conducted to examine the relations between financial status, investment of social capital and the production of human capital in children and parents. Inter-correlations of all predictors and criteria of this three way ANOVA are presented in Tables 39 and 40.

Table 39 shows that modest to moderate correlations were observed among financial, human, and social capital. The father's and mother's education is significantly related to parent-child interaction ( $r = .68, p < .001$ ). A significant correlation was observed between parents' expectations and homework help ( $.36, p < .001$ ). The size of these positive correlations suggests that variables of human capital and social capital are associated but are not redundant. Financial capital is related to all three variables of social capital, namely parent-child interaction, homework help and attendance at parent-

teacher conferences. Parent-child interaction and homework help are the most significantly related, (.41,  $p < .001$ ). As expected, human capital, financial capital and social capital within families are more correlated with each other. The association is quite strong, demonstrating that human capital and social capital have a positive effect on students' educational attainment, both in terms of participation and achievement.

**Table 39: Correlations of Financial, Human and Social Predictors with GPA**

	GPA	Income level (FINCAP)	Parents' education (HUMCAP)	Parents' Expectation (HUMCAP)	Parent-Child Interaction (SOCCAP)	Homework help (SOCCAP)	Attendance at parent Conference (SOCCAP)
GPA	1.00	.167 **	.310***	.346***	.291***	.353***	.283***
Income		1.00	.258*	.281**	.272**	.060***	.172**
Parents' Education			1.00	-.152	.68***	-.060**	.130
Parents' Expectation				1.00	.262	.364***	.242
Parent-Child Interaction					1.00	.412***	.284
Homework Help						1.00	.414***
Attendance							1.00

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$  \*\* $p < .005$  \* $p < .05$ , N= 360

In order to further examine the association of financial, human capital and social capital, a series of three- way ANOVA analyses were conducted, with the children's academic GPA score as the criterion. In this model testing, the interactions and the main effects of financial, human and social capital in the family were examined. The main effect terms were entered as the final steps after the control variables, parent human and financial capital and family social capital.

Results of the univariate regression analysis for predictors in terms of the interaction of financial capital, human capital and social capital affecting on academic achievement are presented in the Table 40.

**Table 40: The Interactions Terms of Financial, Human and Social Capital within Family on Children's Educational Achievements**

Variables	Beta	Standard Error	F values
FINCAP*HUMCAP*SOCCAP	3.273	1.468	3.712*
HUMCAP* SOCCAP	5.265	2.488	3.309*
FINCAP*SOCAP	5.295	2.893	.090
FINCAP*HUMCAP	3.115	4.304	.031
R <sup>2</sup>	0.478		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.22		

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, N=360

In this model of the univariate general linear equation, interactions between social capital and financial and human capital factors in accounting for student achievement were examined. Each interaction term was computed by multiplying the two variables involved. As shown in Table 40, when the two interaction terms (financial-human capital and financial-social capital) were entered into the model, these interactions were not significant in predicting academic achievement once all the other main effects were accounted for. However, the interaction terms operationalized among predictors (human-social capital and financial-human-social capital) show significant effects on student achievement. For instance, the F value for HUMCAP\*SOCCAP is equal to 3.309,  $\beta = 3.273$ ,  $p < .05$  and the F value for FINCAP\*HUMCAP\*SOCCAP is equal to 3.713,



$\beta = 5.265$ ,  $p < .05$ . The variance of the interaction of social capital with financial and human capital indicates that social capital associated with human capital and financial capital produce expected results on student achievement in this sample. This examination of the inter-correlation between social capital and its interaction and student achievement composite scores indicate how social capital improved the effect of financial and human capital on student achievement.

Besides examining the interaction terms among financial, human and social capital within the family, the main effects were examined to see whether financial, human, and social capital independently affect student achievement, controlling for one another. Are these factors significant? If they are, which one plays a more important role in predicting student achievement? The researcher examined the parameter estimates of the variables and the significance levels of financial, human and social capital indicators. Table 41 shows the levels of relationship of these variables on educational achievements.

**Table 41: Parameter Estimates of FINCAP, HUMCAP and SOCCAP on Educational Achievement**

Parameter	Beta	Standard Error	F values
FINCAP	3.320	2.597	1.095
HUMANCAP	3.406	7.547	1.252*
SOCCAP	3.714	1.740	2.788*
R <sup>2</sup>	.486		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.23		
Number of cases	358		
Missing cases	2		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$  and \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

In the case of achievement outcomes (GPA scores), if one can improve family social capital by one standard deviation, a likely prediction is that one will increase the average student achievement score by 3.7 point scale of its standard deviation, controlling

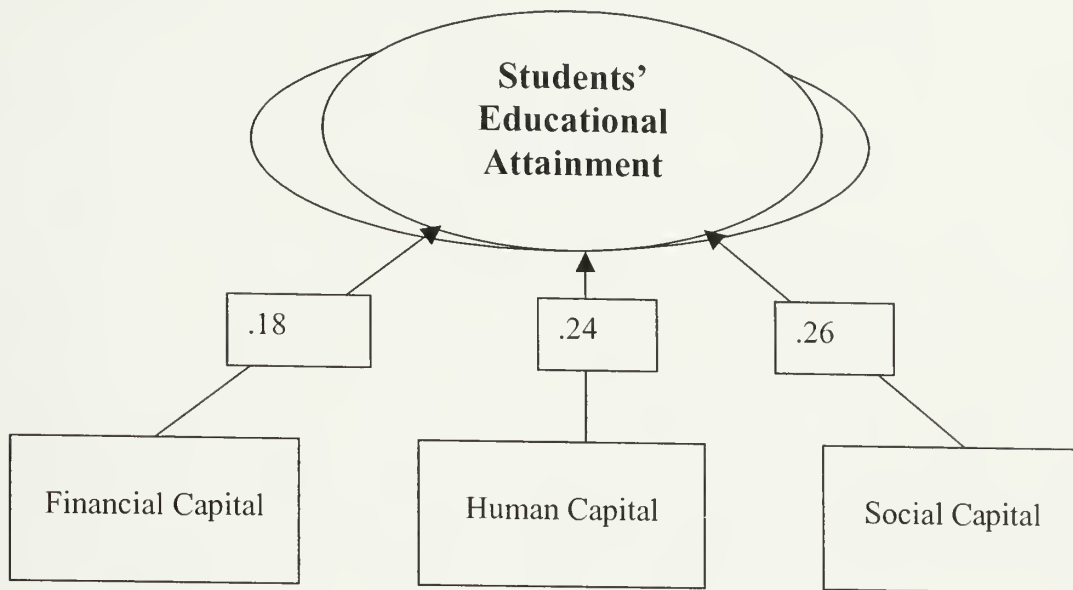
for financial and human capital factors. On the other hand, if one can improve the parents' level of education by one standard deviation, one would predict an increase in student achievement of 3.4 point scale of its standard deviation, controlling for social capital and financial capital. An increase in student achievement of 3.2 point scale of standard deviation is predicted if one can increase family wealth, controlling for social capital and human capital. The relationships of these three factors to student achievement as they were indicated in the researcher's model are shown in Figure 14.

Without looking at school variables, there is thus considerable evidence that the family plays a significant role in student achievement, especially in terms of parental concern and parents' help with their children. One might wonder what would happen if school variables were introduced into the multivariate regression model.

Without looking at school variables, there is thus considerable evidence that the family plays a significant role in student achievement, especially in terms of parental concern and parents' relationships with their children.

This finding is consistent with the literature on the importance of parents' education and parent-child interaction for children's education. The relationship of three factors to children's achievement outcomes as they are indicated by the researcher's model are shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14: Family and Student Achievement Model**



The total variance for Social Capital, Adjusted  $R^2 = .26$

The total variance for Human Capital, Adjusted  $R^2 = .24$

The total variance for Financial Capital, Adjusted  $R^2 = .18$

### **Adaptation in Family, Community and School**

While the family unit in most rural areas in our sample survey appears remarkably robust and resilient in coping with the challenges of the transition to a new economic and social system, new legal and institutional arrangements and a significantly expanded world view, there are also signs of increasing psychological and social tensions associated with the *doi moi* process. These are sensitive issues, including an increase in the number of family breakups, single-headed households, and homeless and parentless children. Although parents mention that life is more convenient under *doi moi* policies,

they are concerned about an apparent increase in incidence of alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, street crime, begging and prostitution.

A father in Hoang Kim said:

We are glad that our living conditions are better with the pace of our development. But I have to say the truth is that it is always more difficult for parents nowadays than before to struggle in this current society. Youths are easily getting caught in gambling and using drugs. There are many negative elements that are rampant, such as many karaoke restaurants, alcohol drinking and *gai lam tien* (prostitutes). I think education is not only a job of the school itself, but it is our real job how to educate our children in family, in community and in school.

Fearing the impact of negative elements on the social life of the commune, a veteran in this village stated:

We will stop these bad factors if they arrive here. We cannot allow having such things to destroy our values and traditions. The youth group, the women's group, the farmers' group together with the veteran group need to help families and children to keep our *nep song ky cuong cua lang* (habits and practices of our village)

Another woman adds:

I think the family is vital in nurturing our children. If we only work to have a better income and ignore our children, negative consequences may arise. Then when something happens, such as bad behavior, truancy, even drug use, we cannot help them any more. Therefore, I'm very fortunate to have my parents who're living together with us. *Ong Ba* (grandparents) keep a close eye on them while we are at work. They are there to remind our children to maintain our *le thoi nha* (house rules). I really don't like *loi song phuong tay* (the western life style) in which the grandparents live in the nursing home.

All participants themselves, however, experience social conflict about how to perceive and define such elements of *te nan xa hoi* (social evils), which they see as disadvantages and disruptive elements. The government and local communities have launched moral campaigns to eliminate social evils which they call *phong trao bai tru te nan xa hoi*. As households are called on to directly get involved in such campaigns, their

attention and concern have been focused, prompting a stronger inclination to reduce elements of social evils.

The extended family has always existed as an important mutual assistance network in Viet Nam. There is no sign that this extended network will be reduced in its scope of activities under *doi moi*. This network can be quite small, consisting of two or three closely related families, or they can be large, numbering hundreds of uncles, aunts and cousins dispersed within a community or throughout different regions of the country. They are sources of information, providing connections for finding jobs, and sources of informal credits (at preferential and sometimes zero interest). The extended family provides a multipurpose network for social and economic advancement to their related members.

As I mention in Chapter Three, there is a long tradition of mutual assistance at village and community levels in Viet Nam. The communal support was interwoven with an equally strong tradition in each household. Under *doi moi*, this balance is being tested because people tend to emphasize the new impetus that has been generated by *doi moi*. People are encouraged to respond to new opportunities and incentives for individual advancement. During a time of rapid social and economic transition and institutional restructuring, community support and family units play a key role in maintaining the balance between the tendency to rush toward a market economy and the keeping of local and family values.

Interaction between parents and schools shapes parental attitudes toward this balance which in turn affects not only parents' involvement at school but also their children's attitude toward their learning and their interaction with teachers and the



administration. Many parents with whom I spoke also expressed a sense of the school's impact. One math teacher in Tien Chau draws a connection between parent involvement and academic achievement:

I've seen in our school a strong relationship between parents that you see all the time at the school and their kids' performance in school. I think there's a pretty strong relationship between parental support and the academic achievement of the kids. I think that parental support is very important.

However, parental involvement varied quite a bit among parents. The principal in Tien Chau felt:

I'm going to say it varies. You've got some parents that are really, really, really involved with their kids. To be honest – my personal opinion - they're the kids that generally excel. Then, you've got the others: "Oh well. I think they went to school today. I'm not sure." They're generally the ones that - they're not as involved with their children - and they're generally the ones that struggle in school. It's just not stressed at home that education is a priority.

The principal in Phuc Yen town offers his insight:

I think it's hard to get anybody in our town at the same level because everybody is very busy with their business. I mean, I've seen that change in the last five years. We are busier here at school with just all the things that come down the road that we need to do with the same amount of staff and the much greater number of kids actually. I think people at home are about the same. They're just really busy. On the one hand, we've got a lot of parents that volunteer and try to get something done. On the other hand, everybody seems stretched to the limit as far as time. And it's hard sometimes to have a big turnout of parents. I mean we just keep trying our best.

In sum, family social capital in relation with financial and human capital adds a great deal to the educational attainment for children in Me Linh district. This study incorporates household income, parental education and family social capital dimensions are family resources in determining variances of children's' educational attainment. The empirical results from model testing and interpretive data show that the important interaction is not necessarily between school and family but between parents and

children. In each of the models analyzing GPA scores, the family interaction variable contributes significantly to explaining the variance.

### **6.5 Summary of Social Capital Formation and its relationship with human capital and educational attainment.**

In summary, the above results support the theoretical framework of educational attainment by demonstrating how various factors in the community and the family have affected educational attainment in Viet Nam. Family resources including the mother's education, the father's education, family-social capital dimensions through parent-child interaction, and parental support are important determinants of children's educational achievements. The most important finding in this study is the fact that family social capital, as operationalized in this study, improves the overall model that estimates GPA score. The main social capital variables used -- family interaction including home work help -- are important in determining GPA score or educational achievement. The impact of financial resources is not as consistent or substantial as we might expect. Indeed, in terms of school attendance and educational achievement, the effect of financial resources is minimal or non-existent in this study. While family resources play a crucial role in children's educational attainment, community factors through membership associations and their functions for educational development are also important. Thus, this study provides a more textured picture of the relationship between community-based and family social capital.

The results also support the theoretical framework by demonstrating that parents' educational background and their perception of the child's education, their expectation for the future, and their knowledge about the educational system are helpful in making

decisions about education for their children. Given the highly-competitive educational system in Viet Nam, parents try to invest in additional educational resources for their children.

Even though this study has been conducted in Me Linh, Viet Nam, the overall pattern of the results suggests that the presence of more resources in the family and the community is related to children's learning outcomes in other villages. Several aspects of social capital formation were found for all villages in this study, and some were different. These differences in social capital formation were often related to differences in village and school context. Community-based social capital in the form of trust, or at least initial trust, is important in all school and village sites. Parents in focus groups told how their trust in the school increased as they became involved in the school and interacted with others. Moreover, along with human and financial capital resources of the family, social capital resources in the family show unique associations with learning outcomes.

As the literature suggests, improving social capital can lead to better educational attainment for all students, including ethnic minority children in Viet Nam. The findings in this study support Coleman's hypothesis that investments of social capital from parents and community are necessary for children to benefit from parent human and financial capital resources. From a developmental perspective in developing countries, these findings are consistent with the expectation that a nurturing environment, high in family social capital, may be important to fully develop the capacity for human capital in the young generation.

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In this chapter, I draw together what I learned from the household survey and from the focus group and in-depth interviews in six communes of Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc province. It begins with a discussion of the major findings and highlights several limitations of this research. The chapter also includes implications which may be drawn from the findings. The final sections of this chapter present recommendations and suggestions for further research. An outline of this chapter is provided below:

**Table 42: Outline of the conclusion chapter**

7.1 Major Research Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent and significant effects of family social capital on children's educational attainment.</li><li>• The <i>Doi moi</i> process has altered the structure and process of community social capital in Vietnamese rural areas.</li><li>• Social Capital Formation is context specific.</li><li>• A gap exists between children from poor and non-poor families.</li></ul>
7.2 Contributions and Limitations of the Research	
7.3 Implications	
7.4 Recommendations and Further Research	

## **7.1 Discussion of the Findings**

The goal of this study was to examine the structure and processes of social capital and its role in educational attainment for children in Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc province, Viet Nam. There is a shortage of systematic, comprehensive measures of social capital in developing countries and of examinations of the effects of investment of social capital on human capital production. This study attempts to address these gaps in the social capital literature and begins to provide a connection between social capital and educational development in the developing world.

According to the conceptual framework on social capital in connection with financial and human capital, educational attainment is determined by both the provision of educational opportunities (structure factors) and decisions to utilize those opportunities (process factors). More specifically, family decisions about education are calculated on the basis of the economic needs and resources of the family, the immediate and long-term opportunities for children in the economy, and the provision, structure, and quality of the educational system. Cultural norms shape all of these factors and their interactions. Using both secondary data and primary household survey data, I applied this framework to the case of Viet Nam in order to examine the determinants of various aspects of educational attainment.

Both quantitative and qualitative data of this study systematically examined the structure and processes by which these factors and their interactions determine such differences in educational attainment. The empirical analyses provided broad support for the main research questions suggested by the theoretical framework. The following points were the key findings:



1. There are independent and significant effects of family social capital on children's educational attainment;
2. The *doi moi* process in Viet Nam has altered the structure and process of community social capital;
3. Social Capital formation is context specific;
4. A gap in accessing educational resources exists between children from poor and non-poor families;

***Finding 1: Independent and significant effects of family social capital on children's educational attainment***

Family social capital, as operationalized in this study, improved the overall model that estimates school attendance and GPA scores. As the literature suggests, improving family social capital can lead to better educational outcomes for students. My main social capital variables, including parent-child interaction and homework help, stand out as independent and significant in determining school attendance and GPA scores of children in this research. This is one of the most intriguing findings of this dissertation. In statistical models, estimates for the analysis of predicting student educational attainment, family interaction and homework variables make large explanatory contributions. Results for school attendance and GPA scores of children demonstrated not only the significance of family social capital resources, but were also robust in all model testing.

Furthermore, the data showed that in six communes, parents knew other parents. Parents contributed the bulk of educational operating costs through tuition and their fees.

Moreover, schools needed volunteer parent labor to supplement the work done by the paid staff and to work on fund-raising and clean-up projects. The use of parent help in these projects created greater social capital formation. Parents at these schools volunteered to a greater degree, as there were many opportunities for them to be involved with the school. As parents volunteered at school, they socially interacted with other parents and/or school personnel. This face-to-face interaction allowed them to get to know each other and form social networks. It was within these that the forms of social capital were established.

Family social capital adds a great deal to the traditional status attainment model. In the traditional model, parental socio-economic status has been the major independent variable predicting student outcomes. In this study, it is important to note the significance of family social capital even after controlling other variables.

Next to family interaction, the mother and father's levels of education make the largest contribution toward explaining the variance in reported GPA scores. Parental educational background is one of the family-level determinants of educational attainment. The individual-level analysis reports an expected result: the parents' educational backgrounds significantly increase the GPA scores as one educational achievement criterion for children. Evidence from the household survey suggests that the relationships between parental educational background and parent-child interaction show a strong support for the educational attainment for girls and boys. Thus, family social capital appears to be one component of intertwined family resources, which, along with parent human and financial capital, reflects parental competence that promotes academic achievement. Interpretive data provide additional explanations. Parents from the in-

depth interviews admitted that their own educational level was not such that they could help their children in terms of home work; however, they were able to provide motivational sources for their children.

In the current *doi moi* process, Viet Nam has begun to move from an agricultural-based society toward an industrial economy. In this transitional period, household economy plays an important role in a village-based, agricultural-driven society. There the husband, wife, and children work together to provide for the family. There is a large amount of social interaction within the family and with those nearby in the community. At the same time, education for children increased in value so that the number of children not in school declined as well. As economic necessity and other social conditions changed during this market - oriented economy, investment in training the young became necessary and thus the school became more important to the family and community. It is the investment in schooling for children that provided for career opportunities in the future.

Overall, the pattern of results was consistent with my expectations. Combined, family social capital, human capital and financial capital provide strong evidence for the importance of family-level resources in determining children's educational attainment. The results provide further support of Coleman's (1988) hypothesis that social capital resources that children receive from their family relationships are related to their production of human capital.

***Finding II: The doi moi process in Viet Nam has altered the structure and process of community-based social capital***

The main questions of this study addressed the structure and process of social capital. In order to create a comprehensive measure of social capital using multiple measures and multiple informants, coefficient correlations, a factor analysis, a logistic regression, and general linear models have been conducted to identify reliable indicators that signify the dimensions of community and family social capital. A number of variables were employed to describe how people established their network and shared their information. In terms of community social capital, a factor analysis was then conducted to elucidate the structure and process of social capital. As expected, a multi-dimensional structure emerged that was stable across six villages. Membership in different organizations was related to social capital dimensions: public engagement, schools' connection, and media usage are all important components of the community's life in Me Linh. The corroboration of the multi-dimensional structure of social capital was found in associational membership, trust, and information sharing. These dimensions broadly related to community sources of social capital described in the social capital literature and supported by the developmental literature (Coleman, 1988 and Putnam, 1993).

In the context of Viet Nam, interpretive data revealed that a community in which a school is located can function as a resource for parents. Since schools function as a resource for children to transition between the home and their place in the community, the community can also function as a resource for the parents. There are social networks where social capital in the form of trust and information sharing can become the eyes,

ears, and legs of the parents in their absence. Where community values are shared and strong, community members can watch out for the children. During the *doi moi* process, which has occasioned many profound changes, parents need all the resources they can find. Therefore, communities that generate social capital continue to be a valuable resource for parents, enabling them to raise their children more effectively than they might alone.

During our in-depth interviews, my questions and our discussions evoked local people's thoughts and feelings, as well as their reactions to their current situation. Local people in six villages of Me Linh district accept the fact that *doi moi* has changed the strength of associations and energy of local people, stimulated people to work hard for their well-being, and encouraged community development. At the same time, they are concerned about emerging social problems, such as crime, violence, drug, and prostitution. It becomes evident to local people that these remarkable achievements should not hide the fact that *doi moi* is a complex and difficult process. The socio-economic inequality between different population groups has been on a rise. Although poverty elimination becomes the utmost goal of Vietnam's development effort, the gap between rich and poor will be wider unless substantial measures are taken at all levels.

***Finding III: Social capital formation was found to be context specific.***

Social capital formation was found to be context specific in this study. The development of the educational system in Viet Nam through reliance on community-level social capital has facilitated the rapid expansion of both formal and non formal education.



As a result, Viet Nam exhibits relatively high levels of literacy and basic education for children and adults. Communities in rural Viet Nam have increasingly changed as the *doi moi* process brought sweeping reforms for the whole society. During this transitional period, shared community values began to link its members together through frequent face-to-face interaction, the forming of social network form, and mutual trust. A commonality of functional community was found in six villages: Hoang Kim, Nam Viem, Ngoc Thanh, Phuc Yen, Quang Minh and Tien Chau. Members in these communities were united by common values, contained multi-dimensional social networks and enjoyed a notable of closeness. Social capital was found in forms such as trust in other people and contact with local government when households were in need.

An important and solidly supported finding of this research is that schools do not exist as autonomous institutions, isolated from their surroundings. Schools are deeply embedded in and penetrated by the communities in which they are situated. This was particularly obvious in the schools and communes on which my study focused. All six communes differed in several aspects, one of which was social capital formation. Schools that get substantial help from community members are likely to possess social capital formed through social interaction. Where there are active people from community leaders, mass organizations, and associations, they are able to interact more frequently, producing more social capital. This was true at Quang Minh, Phuc Yen, and Tien Chau.

In the town of Phuc Yen and in Quang Minh and Tien Chau communes, where there are several industrial factories and a higher demand for services, the communities and families support the schools in their tow and villages through their close network and by maintaining their local norms. Hoang Kim and Nam Viem have typical lowland

agricultural economies with the potential for exploring new types of agricultural products. The Ngoc Thanh mountainous commune, dominated by a large number of San Diu children, creates a different shape of social capital foundation. Results from the household survey demonstrated how educational achievement differed in Ngoc Thanh and other communes, between Kinh's children and San Diu ethnic children. The result may reflect cultural differences in both school attendance and educational achievement.

From the interviews, it became clear that family and community members were more aware of the crucial role of education for children since the *doi moi* process has begun. They showed their support for the school and teachers' work. They accepted the fact that school is the central issue of the commune. As I analyzed in Chapter Six, most parents showed their commitment to their children's schooling, but some parents are still reluctant to get further involved in school programs. These parents appear to believe that the school needs to do everything in educating their children. They fully believe it is the teacher's job to educate them. The question then arises how can schools get parent involved in their educational programs on a wider and more frequent basis.

The findings suggest that Vietnamese education is at the top of the agenda. Socialization of education is implemented as the slogan is circulated: "*Su nghiep giao duc la cua toan dan, toan xa hoi*" (The cause of education is a noble mission of all people and of the whole society). This slogan implies a current of fresh air that has blown across Vietnamese society, as the expression goes, often written in Vietnamese newspapers when people talk about new or big events. The question here is how Vietnam can change the problem at its roots by reinforcing and acknowledging the process of social capital dimensions, rather than merely labeling the problem.

While social capital and the status of attainment research has frequently documented a relationship between family social capital and children's educational experiences in developed countries, few studies have examined the effects of community social capital as well as the effects of family social capital on children's education attainment in developing countries. This dissertation emphasizes how community and family social capital have been shaped during the *doi moi* process in Viet Nam. The research findings show a difference of attainment status across six communes of this study. At the same time, empirical results do not fully explain why family social capital dimensions are different in each commune. Although these finding are not unexpected, the question arises why creates social capital in one community may or may not have the effect in another. Future research on educational attainment should compare the determinants of educational achievements in different areas in order to illuminate the differences more clearly. Future research should also focus on social capital formation and education attainment in urban areas.

***Finding IV: A gap in accessing educational resources exists between children from poor and non-poor families.***

A very interesting finding related to accessing educational resources requires further discussion. While the relationship between gender and educational achievement does not point to a big difference between boys and girls, approaching educational resources shows a big difference between children from poor and non-poor families. The results from the empirical testing show children from better-income levels taking more tutoring classes than children with low income status. Although the results offer a little

support for the hypothesis that family income is an important factor determining educational attainment, the number of children from better-off income levels taking more tutoring classes than children from poor families, signifies a possible inequality in approaching educational resources among those children.

Various features of the current education system in Viet Nam might be a source for this invisible inequality. Different school fees, school supply needs, and tutoring classes create this disparity for poor children. From the interviews, it became clear that schooling is a burden for poor parents. Although Viet Nam has made many efforts to reduce the gap between poor and non-poor families, there have been few attempts to find ways and means to assist children from poor families in terms of schooling needs. Results from the individual-level analysis support this claim. Informants demonstrated how differences educational attainment exist between the children from poor and non-poor families. One limitation of the quantitative method is that it does not include people's stories. Hence, the in- depth interviews provide more explanatory insights. Otherwise, as local people themselves stated, the facts of inequality would have remained buried or in "a quiet status quo" in their own minds, unaddressed and unexamined.

In regard to tutoring classes, the results reveal that in Viet Nam, tutoring provides children close to urban areas with a distinct advantage in navigating the formal educational system. When it comes time for provincial and national exams, rural children and ethnic children in remote and mountainous areas are competing on an uneven playing field. Interestingly, this finding closely corresponds to those reported by Stevenson and Baker (1992) in their study of shadow education in Japan. In Japan as in Viet Nam, the educational system is highly competitive and there are strong links

between school performance and future higher education and employment opportunities. This has led to a system of shadow education marked by, among other things, tutoring. This study suggests that shadow education might be an important role in determining educational differences in Viet Nam. Future comparative research on shadow education could enhance our understanding of how advantages and disadvantages are transferred across generations through such informal educational activities.

## **7.2 Contributions and limitations of the study**

The summary of findings reemphasizes how educational attainment in a rural district of Viet Nam is determined by structural and process dimensions of a community and its family social capital, its linkage with financial and human capital. Previous studies have tended to focus on one or two levels in this process. By appreciating the complexity of the *doi moi* process in Viet Nam, the theoretical model outlined in this dissertation captures the specific and concrete social structures and processes within community and household levels that determine differences in school attendance and educational achievements in a rural district of Viet Nam. This is one of the primary contributions of this dissertation to the study of educational attainment.

Another strength of this study is the use of detailed surveys of 360 households and 360 children aged 10-18 years old in six communes of Me Linh district in Viet Nam. The great advantage of conducting such a survey was that I was able to ask questions to specifically address hypothesis put forth by the theoretical model. The collection of primary data through a survey also enabled the investigation of numerous factors that have not been examined in previous studies of educational attainment in developing



countries. These include parental perceptions regarding the value of education and future expectations of children, culturally-specific measures of socio-economic status, and children's experience with shadow education.

Finally, this study uses quantitative and qualitative data on multiple levels to address the primary research questions. I use secondary data at the national level to provide a general context of Viet Nam during the *doi moi* process. The detailed description about the survey sites provides an understanding of the local context in Me Linh district. Then I use household survey data to examine how various variables across the structure and process within community and family determine differences in children's educational attainment. The strategy to use interpretive data sheds light on the structure and process of community and family social capital and provides rich explanations for which empirical model testing is impossible. The "triangulation" of data and methods provides greater confidence in the research findings than the results of only quantitative research methods. More importantly, this holistic methodological approach encourages the synthesis of individual and structural-oriented perspectives in order to advance comparative and comprehensive theorizing about educational attainment. Too often theory - building is limited by the assumed incompatibility of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Ironically, one of this dissertation's greatest strengths, the use of a detailed household survey, is also the source of one of its limitations. By covering community social capital and family social capital, the survey offers a considerable advance over most surveys in Viet Nam that are limited to examining mostly the financial status of households. However, even with its focus on family and community social capital, this

study did not address school social capital sources. The survey does not include school variables that account for a large number of educational achievements among children in this study. School variables include teachers, administrators, and staff who may play a decisive role in educational attainment in Viet Nam. The broader context of school, community and family needs to be further investigated. Therefore, while every effort was made to collect representative and varied samples of villages and households within villages, as with any survey, the generalizability of the survey must be approached cautiously.

This study is also limited by its reliance on cross-sectional data to investigate structure and processes that occur over time. There has been a need for longitudinal data over many years that could be used to investigate social capital foundations within family, community and school regarding educational attainment. Such a longitudinal study would be time-consuming and expensive, and my limited time frame and budget precluded such a survey design.

The other shortcoming is that this study follows Coleman and Putnam's conceptual framework for research, which was conducted in Western countries alone. Although I have used the techniques of Narayan in her study on social capital and poverty in Tanzania, there are very few studies on this topic available in today's literature for developing countries. Future researchers may like to extend this study to include different parts of the world. It would be interesting to replicate this study with a broader context in Viet Nam, such as urban areas, by including variables of school, community and family. It would also be interesting to compare the similarities and differences in

educational attainment derived from influences of social capital in different regions in Viet Nam.

Despite these limitations, the results of this comprehensive analysis have important implications for the future of educational attainment in Viet Nam. More generally, these results also challenge several current assumptions about education in developing countries. The following sections discuss several points related to each of these issues.

### **7.3 Implications for the Future of Education in Viet Nam**

The results of this study provide detailed information regarding the causes of socio-economic reform in educational attainment in rural Viet Nam. What implications do these findings have for the future of education in Viet Nam? Undeniably, they provide several grounds for concern, as follows:

1. The results of the research reveal that local and family characteristics are important in understanding children's educational attainment patterns. Each community has its own values for the educational development of children and adults. Towns and industrial areas become more organized toward the market economy system and adjust to a highly competitive education systems. Communities with ethnic - minority children need more support from central and local governments so that their children can have more access to the educational resources available.

2. The escalating costs of schooling mean that education will be affordable to only a certain segment of society, while a number of poor children and ethnic minority children will have limited or less access to education. Indeed, as indicated in Chapter Three, despite the continued expansion of the education system, the children in rural

areas or ethnic minority groups have faced many difficulties to complete the basic education system, which includes primary and junior secondary education. Although most parents struggle to keep their children in school as long as possible until they can no longer afford the escalating costs, many poor families are unable to afford the costs of basic education for their children. Given the operational realities of funding local education, poor parents are also unable to pay for tutoring classes or contributing to school funds. As education costs continue to rise unchecked, the educational experiences of children from different income levels will continue to diverge.

### 3. Expanding the scope of research studies in developing countries

Social capital theory has developed from Western literature. Western education has been overly focused on the issues of human capital in the 60s', 70s' and early 80s'. A challenge against one interpretation in developed countries was the outcry on the decline of social capital. From this outcry, the concept of social capital was born, discussed, debated and defined. From the 1990s on, interest in social capital has been increasing and research studies on this topic have gained a great momentum. This theory aimed to enrich the theory on human development. Therefore, most studies on the influences of social capital and financial and human capital on educational attainment have been conducted in the context of developed countries with established educational systems.

Although western sociologists and educators have contributed a great deal to the theory of social capital, it needs to be expanded to developing countries in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its applications. Thus, another contribution of this research to the theory of social capital development is its effort to demonstrate the

importance of family and community social capital for children's educational attainment in a transitional country such as Viet Nam.

Theoretical perspectives, too, should be expanded in developing countries; it is to be hoped that they will be welcomed in Viet Nam and, through the filter of Vietnamese culture, they may be a tool to examine and analyze the partnership web between school, family and community.

The more we share about our schools of thought and engage in discussions, the more we can learn from one another. The Vietnamese education system can benefit from the experiences of a variety of educational movements. Thus, why my deep exposure to social capital theory and its relationship to education policies will enable me to apply beneficial aspects of our rapidly changing educational systems in the world to educational reform in Viet Nam.

4. To some degree, schools, communities and parents acknowledge their mutual relationships, but some parents assume schools can do everything in educational delivery. This is exactly a "do-everything school" approach in the "old-fashioned" pedagogy. However, in a competitive market economy, the partnership between school, parents, and community becomes a systematic and long-term strategy for change. Education is not only the work of schools, but also a joint effort of the whole society. Socialization of education is not only a slogan, but requires concrete work from all: schools, families, and communities.

At the family level, parent-child interaction about school matters can be defined as a source of educational mobility in Viet Nam. The voices from different generations, ages, and cohorts vary, but in general they all perceive the importance of education for all



people. Rural parents invest their time, money and their work for their children's schooling. However, they don't receive any further guidance as to how to help their children. The role of parent-teacher associations needs to be leveled up so as to have more impact on school policies.

5. Another cause for concern that is less obvious but strongly implicated by the research findings is the hot issue between quantity and quality in education. The rampant tutoring classes signify that teachers may place more emphasis on private lessons rather than on normal school hour classes. Given that more than half the children in the study have taken some form of tutoring classes, shadow education suggests that policy makers do not intend to improve the quality of the current system but let the shadow education freely expand instead.

The mismatch between quantity and quality raises a much concern as it appears to be a source of growing dissatisfaction and conflict in Vietnamese educational policies. As Theis (1999, p.3) points out, the Vietnamese education system, in general, places a greater emphasis on quantity than on quality of education. The emphasis on quantity includes the implementation of Universal Primary Education and the concentration on preparing children for passing examinations. The findings of this study have several important implications for policy makers who are actively involved in improving educational quality in Viet Nam. Just as the *doi moi process* has been carried out in Viet Nam, there have been corresponding changes in the structure of schooling as well as processes of educational delivery.

Though this study didn't address learning and teaching modes, there is a growing concern about the type of "passive learning" that still exists in the Vietnamese school

system, both in the classroom and the school environment. Rote learning is dominant and creative learning has less soil to grow in. Critical thinking and problem-solving are needed in curriculum guidelines and teaching practices. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is here, but the Vietnamese educational system might need more time to change the old ways of educational delivery, as most parents and teachers have suggested. Future studies should further examine current learning and teaching practices in today's schools in Viet Nam.

#### **7.4 Recommendations and Implications for the Study of Social Capital and Education in Developing Countries**

##### ***Recommendations***

My analysis of social capital and educational attainment in Me Linh, Vinh Phuc province of Viet Nam, has focused on the family, community, school and educational policies. Combining the results of the household survey and participants' ideas, the following recommendations may be appropriate for the current Vietnamese educational system, to deal with educational attainment issues in general, the education system in particular, and the social system as a whole.

The results of this study determined the need for investment, restructuring organization, and re-conceptualizing of the partnership of parents, communities, and schools in Vietnamese society. The following are some basic aspects that the government, policy-makers and educators should consider:

- 1. Establish the partnership web through family, community and school at a new level corresponding to the market-oriented economy.* The community or socialization of education could point toward more caring, equality - based relationships in which parents provide emotional support for their children, rather than punishment and long working

hours. At the same time, a greater cultural emphasis on collective cohesion may foster partnerships and validate the assumption that interaction and relationships among parents and children could lead to better educational results. It also creates a good environment for children who grow up in warm households where parents participate in social activities while maintaining the family bonds.

2. *Reinforcing partnership web of family, community and family through educational policies.* General education is the foundation of society and of a knowledge-based economy. It is important, therefore, that the government continue to invest in general education. The intent of this research is to call attention to the fact that the agenda for the partnership and cohesion in the market-oriented economy for children, in society and in education, has not been met. The essential goal of this research is to recognize the importance of effecting a change in parents, communities, and schools and resolving the question of partnership to lead to better educational attainment for children in Viet Nam today.

3. *Narrowing the gap between children from poor and non-poor families in their approach to educational resources.* Children who belong to poorer households are more likely to dropout of school. This is related to many different school fees, private tutoring classes, and other related costs, which hit the poor children disproportionately. It is necessary to set up an effective mechanism to raise scholarship funds exclusively for children who are categorized as poor. With scholarships to cover school needs, they will be eligible to complete their basic education.

4. *Develop strategies to improve education quality for all children in Viet Nam, especially for ethnic minority children.* The Vietnamese education system, as with any other education system in developing countries, is not static, but is ever changing. One of the first realistic steps to improve the quality of education and minimize the cost wasted in private tutoring is to improve teaching and learning methods. At the school level, the static learning mode poses a serious problem to the education system in Viet Nam. This may be the result of passive teaching methods rooted in Confucian education. Learners becoming passive in the school environment will be ill-prepared for a competitive market economy. When children are active in the learning process and participate more fully in school activities, their quality of their education is enhanced. While continuing the program of “Education for All”, educational policy makers need to find ways and means to improve educational quality for all children, especially for ethnic minority children.

To improve the quality of teaching and learning, increase access to education, and improve the relevance of education for ethnic minority children, two steps need to be taken: (1) increase the amount of time children spend at school, and (2) improve language teaching and communication between teachers and students. There is a great need to revise the classroom content, curriculum, and textbooks to make them more relevant to ethnic minority children. Future research should explore concrete strategies as well as ways and means to improve education quality for all children, and especially for ethnic minority children.

### *Further Implications for Future Studies in Developing Countries*

My analysis of Social Capital and Education Attainment in Vietnam is a test of the concept in a developing region and supports the findings of Coleman and his followers. While Coleman's ideas on social capital were applicable in the context of American society and its school systems, this analysis is characterized in the context of Viet Nam during its sweeping reform. This dissertation also has implications that extend beyond the case of Viet Nam to other developing countries. Some of the results of the study challenge current assumptions about education and inequality in the developing world. First, as the results of the Education for All in the early 1990s, many countries made tremendous efforts to bring basic education to all people. While this goal is clearly stated, the means and ways to implement this goal are very different in each country. As a result, Viet Nam has encouraged community self-help efforts to expand the supply of schooling. The slogan circulated (*Nha nuoc va Nhan dan cung lam giao duc* – the State and People join efforts for education), reflect an assumption that if schools can be built and maintained, communities can fill the gaps in educational facilities that the state can not provide. But as the case of Viet Nam makes clear, the reliance on community self-help efforts can lead to great regional and ethnic disparities in terms of school supply. Wealthy, well-organized communities and ethnic groups can provide more and better schools than their poor, less organized counterparts. The imbalances may lead to greater fractionalization among ethnic groups and regions which, in turn, may threaten national unity.



The success of the movement *Nha nuoc va Nhan dan cung lam giao duc* – the State and People join efforts for education - may vary according to the state's ability to control or guide this program. Difficult provinces and regions may have little capacity to ensure that educational opportunities expand evenly across regions and ethnic groups. Strong provinces, and districts may be more effective in encouraging this movement in the expansion of educational opportunities while monitoring regional and ethnic inequalities.

To further advance our understanding of educational attainment in developing countries, future research can extend the theoretical framework and results of this dissertation to other fruitful lines of inquiry. First, studies could add school variables as one dimension of social capital foundation. Such research could examine influences of a school's factors, such as the teaching staff, administrators, learning and teaching modes, extra-activities curricula, and so on. It would help to predict the educational and institutional factors of school systems on educational attainment in Viet Nam. Second, studies could examine whether differences in educational attainment between rural and urban areas exist, and, if so, such studies should identify the reasons underlying these differences. Third, future studies could investigate detailed examples of shadow education in developing countries. Such research would reveal how advantages and disadvantages can be transferred from parents to children through educational activities that occur outside the formal schooling. It would also help predict the social and institutional factors that give rise to the phenomenon of shadow education in Viet Nam and in other developing countries.

Fourth, future studies should include various measures of child labor as possible determinants of educational attainment. Currently, our understanding of the relationship between work and schooling in Viet Nam and other developing countries is only sketchy. The household economy model provides a useful theoretical tool for investigating this issue. Given the prevailing assumption and important policy implications regarding the relationship between child labor and educational attainment, this topic should be a research topic for scholars of education.

### **Conclusion**

Like many other less developed countries of the world, Viet Nam continues to confront numerous challenges and even development dilemmas such as rapid population growth, international pressure for political and economic reform, and the transformation resulting from the *doi moi* reform process. As *doi moi* continues its social-economic paths in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, education has a central role to play in the reform process removing all barriers to development. Higher levels of educational attainment are related to economic growth, a sense of national unity, reduced fertility, and improved quality of life. The questions addressed in this study should be critically evaluated by parents, teachers, administrators and education policy makers. Much rhetoric revolves around the institutions of family and education, yet often little is done to actually strengthen these powerful institutions. This study helps to direct attention toward the relationships among community, families and schools and at the relationships within families which can influence educational attainment. There is a need for more research in this area to clarify how school social capital may be related to the child's educational attainment and the production of human capital.

## APPENDIX A

### OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION

(Several research instruments were adapted from the study of Narayan, D., 1997 in *Voices of the Poor: Poverty and Social Capital in Tanzania*. However, I modify interview guides and instruments to reflect the Vietnamese context.

### CORE INTERVIEW GUIDE TOPICS

- COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL CAPITAL: QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE AND THE RELATED SOCIAL NORMS
- COMMUNITY-SCHOOL RELATIONS: INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL THROUGH DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS
- COMMUNICATION AMONG PARENTS, CHILDREN, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PERSONEL
- EXPECTATION FOR STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION AND COMPLETION MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Household Survey

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day Month

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_

House sample # \_\_\_\_\_ Start time  
\_\_\_\_\_ a.m/p.m

End time  
\_\_\_\_\_ a.m/p.m

## Family Social Capital

### Structural Attributes

1. Are you the head of the household?
  1. yes
  2. no
  0. no answer/ don't know
  
2. What is your relationship to the head of the household? Is it:
  1. Wife
  2. daughter
  3. mother
  4. sister
  5. son
  0. no answer/don't know
  9. other
  
3. What is your ethnic group?
  1. Kinh
  2. Muong
  3. San Diu
  4. San Chay
  0. no answer/don't know
  9. other (specify)
  
4. How many children do you have in your household?
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - More than five
  
5. What is the major source for your family income?
  
6. Who makes most of the decisions about financial matters in this household? Is it:

1. yourself
2. your husband/wife
3. you and your husband/wife share the responsibility of financial decisions
  0. no answer/don't know
  9. other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you or any member of this household own lands?
1. yes
  2. no

8. What is the land used for? Is it used for:

- |                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 yes                        | 2. no ..... food crops        |
| 1 yes                        | 2.no ..... cash crops         |
| 1 yes                        | 2.no ..... Keeping livestock  |
| 1 yes                        | 2.no ..... leasing to tenants |
| 0..... no answer/don't know  |                               |
| 9..... other (specify) _____ |                               |

9. Do you get income from crops? Could you estimate this yield from each crop in term of money?

10. Do you own or rent this house?

1. own
2. rent
0. no answer/ don't know
9. other (specified) \_\_\_\_\_

11. What kind of roof of your house?

1. Thatched
2. Sheet
3. bricks
4. cement
9. other specific

12. Indicate which of the following items are present in your home

1. Television/VCR
2. Refrigerator
3. Bicycle
4. Motorcycle
5. Radio



13. According to the village's categories, your household is ranked at which income levels, is it at

1. High Income
2. Middle income
3. Low Income – at poverty line
4. Under poverty line
0. don't know/ know answer
9. other ( specify)

14. What are your educational levels?

Husband

Wife

- |                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. ....none                  | 1.....none                    |
| 2.....adult literacy classes | 2..... adult literacy classes |
| 3.....elementary education   | 3..... elementary education   |
| 4.....lower secondary        | 4..... lower secondary        |
| 5..... upper secondary       | 5..... upper secondary        |
| 6.....vocational secondary   | 6.....vocational secondary    |
| 7.....university degree      | 7..... university degree      |
| 8.....graduate degree        | 8..... graduate degree        |
| 0.....no answer/ don't know  | 0.....no answer/ don't know   |

15. The number of family's members?

Husband

Wife

Children

Grandfather

Grandmother

Family Social Capital: Process Attributes

Parental aspirations for children

16. Who makes most of the decisions about the children's schooling in this household? Is it:

1. Head of the household

2. your husband/wife
3. Husband/Wife shares the responsibility of schooling decisions
0. no answer/don't know
9. other ( specify) \_\_\_\_\_

17. What level of education would you wish for your children? Do you want them to:

- | Boy   | Girl     |
|---|----------|
| 1. finish primary school                      | 1. _____ |
| 2. finish secondary school                    | 2. _____ |
| 3. have some secondary school                 | 3. _____ |
| 4. get a degree from polytechnic              | 4. _____ |
| 5. get a degree from teacher training college | 5. _____ |
| 6. get a degree from a university             | 6. _____ |
| 0. no answer/don't know                       | 0. _____ |
| 9. other (specified) _____                    | 9. _____ |

18. In your opinion, what is most important things to consider in a future job for your children

- | Boy  | Girl     |
|--|----------|
| 1. job will use child's ability                      | 1. _____ |
| 2. salary is high                                    | 2. _____ |
| 3. there is job security                             | 3. _____ |
| 4. work is easy                                      | 4. _____ |
| 5. job is helpful to people and community            | 5. _____ |
| 6. job is flexible & allow time for other activities | 6. _____ |

19. How do you think, who are more intelligent, boys or girls?

1. boys
2. girls
3. both are equal
0. no answer/don't know
9. other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

20. Do you expect to receive financial help from any of your children in your old age?

1. yes
2. no
0. no answer/don't know

21. In your opinion, is raising children today harder or easier than it was when you were growing up? Would you say that it is:

1. much harder
2. a little harder
3. about the same
4. a little easier
5. much easier
0. no answer/ don't know

What are some reasons for your answer?

22. Some people say when children do well in school, it is because they have qualified teachers. Others say that it is because their family helps and encourage them. In your opinion, which is more important? It is:

1. qualified teachers
2. a family that helps and encourages
3. both are equally important
0. no answer/don't know
9. other (specify)\_\_\_\_\_

23. In your opinion, what is the most important school subject for children in general?

Boy

1. math
2. Vietnamese language
3. Other languages
4. science
5. home economics
6. agriculture
7. technical training
8. history
9. geography
- other (specify)

Girls

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
- other (specify)

24. Do you think that opportunities for getting a secondary education are the same for girls and boys?

0. No different for girls and boys
1. worse for girls
2. better for girls
0. no answer/ don't know
9. other (specify)\_\_\_\_\_

25. Suppose you had just enough money to send one of your children to secondary school. Now assume you had to choose between a son and a daughter. Who would you rather send to school?

- 1. your son
- 2. your daughter
- 3. or would you not send any to school
- 0. no answer/don't know
- 9. other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What are some reasons for your choice?

26. Parent-Child Discussion at home about schooling

About how often do you talk with your children about what they learn in school and the progress they are making? It is:

- 1. often
- 2. some times
- 3. never
- 0. no answer / don't know
- 9. other (specify)

27. Do you help or supervise your children on school work at home?

0= no                      1=yes

if yes, on average, how long each day

28. Do you often help your children doing their home work?

- 1. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 3. Never
- 0. no answer/don't know
- 9. other (specify)

29. Do you attend parent meetings?

- 1. every meeting
- 2. once and a while
- 3. not at all
- 0. no answer/don't know
- 9. other (specify)

30. Do you participate to any activities that support to raise fund for the school?

- 1. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 3. Never

- 0. no answer/don't know
- 9. other (specify)

31. What kinds of funds for school's activities do you contribute?
32. Does your family contribute to help school in maintaining classrooms, playground, expanding labs and building school's library?

- 0. Cash
- 1. Labor
- 2. In kind
- 0. No contribution
- 9. other (specify)

#### Community social capital

##### Structural attributes

34. Do you know parents whose children are in the same class with your child?
- 1= yes , 0= no
35. If yes, do you ever discuss with them about children's learning and activities?
- 1. Often
  - 2. Sometimes
  - 3. Rarely
  - 4. Never
  - 0. no answer/don't know
  - 9. other (specify)

36. Do all children in the village go to the same school?

1= yes, 0 = no

37. If they don't go to the same school in the village, where would they go? Name the school type in which your children are enrolled?

##### Process attributes

##### Membership in various voluntary associations or group

38. Are you a member of any group or association in the village?



39. If yes, which one do you belong too?( if more than one, check appropriate boxes)
1. Women's group
  2. Farmers' group
  3. Veteran's group
  4. VAC's group
  5. Other
40. Why do you join groups?
1. Economic support
  2. Bring people together, belonging
  3. Strengthen religious beliefs
  4. Provides consolation
  5. Provides encouragement, emotional support
  6. To share information. Ideas, news
  7. Makes one important
  8. Provides credit
  9. Provides marketing opportunities
  10. Other
41. Associational activity
1. Has membership declined?
  2. Has the membership the same?
  3. Has the membership increased?
42. How are groups functioning?
1. Very good
  2. Good
  3. Average
  4. Poor
  5. Very poor

43. If there is a fee, what happen if a member does not pay the fee?

1. Ask to leave the group
2. Delay in payment accepted
3. Nothing happen

43a . Does the group receive outside support?

1. NGOs
2. Government
3. Foreign donors
4. Federation
5. Church or temples

44. Are the group's members the same kin or the same clan?

1. Close relatives
2. Same clan
3. Different tribes
4. Anyone in the village

45. Does the same clan influence learning and education of their clan children?

1= yes                      0= no

46. Do groups in which you belong too involve in any kind of activities for schooling?

0. yes
1. no
2. don't know
9. other (specify)

47. If yes, what kind of activities do your group get involved. List of activities, such as,

1. raising fund for school

- 2. contribution in kind to school ( including labor)
- 9. other ( specify)

48. Which of the following would best describe your religious orientation? Are you:

- 1. Buddhist
- 2. Catholic
- 3. Protestant
- 4. Muslim
- 5. Traditional
- 0. none
- 9. other ( specify)

49. How often have you attended religious services?

- 1. often
- 2. sometimes
- 3. seldom/rarely
- 4. never
- 0. no answer/don't know
- 9. other (specify)

50. How important is your religion to your life?

- 1. very important
- 2. important
- 3. somewhat important
- 4. not important
- 0. no answer/ don't know

#### Values and Attitudes on trust and social cohesion

51. How much trust/confidence do you have to the local government?

- 1. great deal
- 2. somewhat
- 3. Yes
- 4. little
- 5. no trust at all

52. Are there more or fewer people you can trust now?

- 1. Fewer

2. Same
3. More
4. Much more

If yes, reasons for maintaining of trust

1. Life much more improve
2. Impact of market economy
3. Open job market

53. Reasons for declining trust

1. Life more difficult
2. Greater economic problems
3. Decline in values, corruption
4. People more selfish
5. Youth discipline
6. Loss of belief in God
7. Hunger
8. Lack of wisdom
9. Many newcomers
10. Other

54. Have you ever contacted any government officials for any need or problem?

1= yes                      0=no

55. If yes, did you receive any help from local authorities? Could you bring up some examples?

56. Do you often keep up-date on local, national and international news?

1=yes                      0= no

57. Do you read newspaper? If yes, how often

1. regularly
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. none

58. Do you listen to radio? If yes, how often

1. regularly
2. sometimes
3. rarely
4. none

59. Of those, on which source did you depend most for getting information on political news, government and local policy?

1. Newspaper
2. Radio
3. TV
4. associations/groups
5. combinations of 1,2,3 and 4
6. none

60. Do you come to the election events to vote for Congress' members and local representatives?

1= yes

0=no



### Children's Schooling

Children currently enrolled. Now, for each child in the family between ages 10-18, including those away, I would like to ask specific questions about their experiences with schooling.

Fill in the name if the child in the blank. Do this for each child.

.....Name

61. age

62. sex

63. current level of schooling

64. What is the name of the school he/she is enrolled in now?

65. What type of school is this? Is it a:

3. public school
4. private school
5. people-founded school
6. boarding school
  - a. other ( specify)

66. Do you have to pay school tuition?

1= yes      0=no

67. Do you have enough textbooks and school supplies?

(0=no    1= yes)

Math books

Language books

Science books

Note books

Other school supplies?

68. By what transportation mean do you go to school?

1. by foot
2. by bicycle
3. drop/pick up by parents
4. by different means

69. If you have to walk to school, how much time does it take you to walk?

1. less than 15 minutes
2. approximately 15 minutes
3. around half an hour
4. around an hour
- 5= more than one hour

70. To what educational plan do you intend to complete?

1. completion of the primary education
2. completion of the lower secondary education
3. completion of the upper secondary education
4. completion of the vocational school
5. completion of the three year training school
6. completion of the higher education
0. don't know
9. other ( specify)

71. What do you want to become in the future ?

(she/he can choose 3 careers upon his/her preferences)

1. Nurse
2. Teacher
3. Professional careers (engineer, medical doctor, manager ...)
4. Entrepreneur
5. State Official
6. Soldier/Officer
7. Agricultural farm
8. Factory
10. Social workers
11. Tourist
0. don't know
9. other (specify)

72. Do you receive any support or supervision of anyone at home in regard to your homework?

0=no, 1=yes

If yes, who does help you?

1. father
2. mother
3. sister/brother
4. relatives
5. tutors

73. In general, do you want to go to school? Why?

74. Do you go to school regularly?

5. Regularly

6. Irregularly

75. Do you need to take any tutoring?

1= yes, 0= no

If yes, which subjects?

1. Language

2. Math

3. Social Studies

4. Natural Sciences

5. Foreign Languages

6. other subjects

76. Do you have to help your family? If yes, in what way

1. Household chores

2. Help parents in markets

3. Work in factory

4. Work in farm

5. Taking care of small siblings or elderly grandparents?

0. no answer

9.(other specify)

77. How many hours a day do you spend on doing household chores?

1. one hour

2. two hours

3. three hours

4. four hours

5. five hours

6. more than five hours

78. Reasons for dropping-out or not attending class?

1. Sickness

2. Busy with household chores

3. Crop season

4. Unable to learn

5. Not enough money paid for school tuition

- 6. No textbooks or school supplies
- 7. Taking care of small siblings
- 8. Earn cash for families
- 0. no answer/don't know
- 9. other ( specify)

79. Among your siblings, does anyone drop-out during the secondary educational level?

0= no, 1= yes

80. Did you ever repeat any grade or drop-out

0=no , 1=yes

81. Can you tell me the class performances last semester?

- 1. Excellent
- 2. Good
- 3. Average
- 4. Bellow average
- 5. Bad

82. What are your general opinions about school?

APPENDIX B  
SCHOOL PROFILE

District \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Background

1. Physical location, surroundings, proximity to villages/town, size and nature of villages/town
2. History – date founded, by who, special circumstances or central events
3. School relationships with district and provincial level (e.g. a core school or cluster school)
4. Description of physical sites, ground, plants, trees, buildings, conditions, maintenance, cleanliness

Supporting Inputs

5. Parents and community involvement – PTO activities, assistance to school, forms of involvement and support. View of community leadership about the school needs and school effectiveness,
6. Support from the Provincial and Ministry of Education and Training ( or other external sources, e.g. NGO):
  - Policy direction ( e.g. awareness of reform and decentralization policy)
  - Level and quality of supervision
  - In-service training activities for head and teachers
  - Assignment of staff to school and conditions of service.
7. Material support
  - Provision of textbook, teacher guides, other books and instructional materials, equipment.
  - Provision/condition of classroom, storage, office, library, furnishing, latrines, water, and sport.

The students ( Note difference for girls and boys)

8. Estimated proportion of school age children in catchments areas who are in school
9. Students' health and readiness for learning: cleanliness, evidence of sickness, hunger, malnutrition, demand on student from chores at home, distance to school.
10. Students' opinions about the family, schools and community



## School leadership

11. Description of school principal (and/or deputy) age, sex, education and training ( both pre-service and in-service) years of experience, years of living in area, manner and character, central concerns, interests.
12. Role of principal in relation to student, teachers, parents, community, district and provincial department of education.
13. Methods of leadership: staff meetings, assemblies, supervision, visits from/to community leaders, parents, special events, oral and written communications.
14. Role of the teachers, pupils in decisions about school management, activities and events.
15. Motivation of principals, views of students' capacity, satisfaction with situation?

## Teaching Force

16. Overall level of experience, education, training. Commitment and effectiveness of teachers
17. Student-teacher ratios; multi-class teaching & teachers preparation for that
18. Subject knowledge, language ability of teachers ( e.g. knowledge of Vietnamese language)
19. Attendance/punctuality – teachers come to school, on time and stay the full day?
20. Motivation of teachers. Teachers views students' capacity, satisfaction with situation, daily school schedule
21. Does the school have a timetable?
22. Is the timetable adhered to? Does school start on time, class start on time, is there a full school day? Or are there frequent interruption, children unattended in classes, or other activities (sport, holidays, preparation for extra-curricular events, garden, etc.)

## Participation & Achievement

23. Daily attendance of pupils ( note any patterns by class and sex)
24. Level of repetition and drop-out ( also note any significance pattern by class and sex)
25. Proportion of student starting grade 6 and who complete grade 9
26. Proportion of student who continue the upper secondary education

## APPENDIX C

### GUIDES OF FOCUS GROUP AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

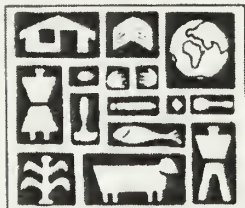
#### On-Site Data Collected

1. Interviews with the site principals (six principals and 6 vice-principal)
2. Teacher Focus Groups ( four to six teachers at each school)
3. Parent Focus Groups ( two sessions of volunteers)
4. Visits families in study sites (three families in each villages for in-depth interviews)
5. Face-to Face Household Survey to 360 randomly picked families (12 teacher-researcher assistants and 6 principals)
6. Ability to visit school sites during the days to observe parent and school personnel interaction.
7. Documents

#### Document Request List

1. School Annual Reports since 1996-2001
2. School calendar
3. Faculty list
4. Parent volunteer applications, instructions or other related materials
5. List of Parent-Teacher Association
6. Community Report on School's programs in 6 study schools
7. School newsletters for the current year

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST FOR THE RESEARCH



*CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION*

School of Education  
Hills House South  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, MA 01003-4110 USA

Telephone: 413-545-0465 • Fax: 413-545-1263 • Internet: CIE@educ.umass.edu

May 15, 2001

Prof. Tran Van Nhung  
Vice-Minister of Education and Training  
49 Dai Co Viet, Hanoi  
Vietnam

Dear Prof. Tran Van Nhung,

I am writing on behalf of Miss **Duong Van Thanh** a Vietnamese doctoral student at the Center for International Education of the University of Massachusetts. I am the chair of her doctoral dissertation committee. Thanh has successfully completed her Comprehensive Examination and is now approved to begin work on her dissertation research. Her dissertation proposal has been approved by her committee and in June, 2001 she will journey to Vietnam to begin collecting data for her dissertation.

Any assistance or support which you and the Ministry of Education can give Thanh during her field research would be greatly appreciated. I believe that the topic of her dissertation research will be relevant and useful to policy issues being faced by Vietnam in the challenge to provide quality education to today's students in Vietnam. Her interest in better understanding how communities can contribute more effectively to the success of their children in school should provide important insights into ways that investment in education can be more productive.

If you would like to get more information about the program in International Education which is sponsoring her degree, I encourage you to visit our web site at: <http://www.umass.edu/cie>. If I can provide you or your office with further information about Thanh and her research, I would be pleased to do so.

I'm sure that Thanh will keep your office informed about the progress of her research and can also provide details of her program of study here at the University of Massachusetts. May I express my appreciation in advance for whatever support and cooperation your office can provide to Thanh.

Sincerely,

Dr. David R. Evans, Professor  
Center for International Education  
Fax: 413-545-1263  
Email: dre@educ.umass.edu

Duong Van Thanh  
Educational Policy, Research and Administration  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Date

Dear

My name is Duong Van Thanh, a Program Official at the International Relations Department, Ministry of Education & Training and a doctoral student of University of **Massachusetts, Amherst**, Department of Educational Policy, Research and Administration.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project **on family, community social capital and** educational attainment during *doi moi* process in Viet Nam. I hope your contribution would be to agree to engage in one to two hour interviews. **Your** knowledge and experiences will enhance **the** research and education **development in** Viet Nam

My address in Viet Nam is:

A 104 phuong Cong Vi, Quan Ba Dinh, Hanoi Viet Nam at the telephone number 852 3257.

My address in Massachusetts:

503 Kennedy Building

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

MA 01003

Tel. (413) 545 4221 (W)

(413) 546 4514 (H)

The Chair of my dissertation Committee:

Prof. David R. Evans

Center for International Education

School of Education University of Massachusetts

Amherst, MA 01003-USA

Tel. (413) 545 0465

Fax. (413) 545 1263

I appreciate your response and your contribution. I am looking forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Duong Van Thanh

Duong Van Thanh  
Educational Policy, Research and Administration  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in the research study conducted by Duong Van Thanh, from University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Dept. of Educational Policy, Research and Administration. This study is examining the dimensions of community, family social capital and educational attainment of Viet Nam. This is an empirical research study being conducted in six villages of Me linh district, Vinh Phuc Province, Viet . I would hope your contribution would be to agree to engage in our field research as research assistants. Before the actual research is taking place, you will receive a short time training in one school of Me linh district for three days.

Any information you collected from a household survey will be subject to your review. Your participation will be voluntary. The data from the household survey will be coded for model testing. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Me linh district and the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation any time without penalty.

If you have any question, please feel free to contact me at the address: A 104 phuong Cong Vi, Quan Ba Dinh, Hanoi Viet Nam at the telephone number 852 3257.

Your signature below indicates you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty You will be offered a copy of this form to keep and you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies

I appreciate your understanding and participation.

Signature of participant

date

I give permission for the interview to be audio-taped (check the box):    yes    no



Duong Van Thanh  
Department Educational Policy, Research and Administration  
School of Education  
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### School Consent Form

As a representative of \_\_\_\_\_, I understand that the results of this study are confidential in that no individual or school will be identified in any report of findings. Furthermore, our participation in this study is entirely voluntary and our participation may be withdraw at any time without any impact to school or individual within the school.

If there are any question about this study, please contact Duong Van Thanh at A 104 phuong Cong Vi, Quan Ba Dinh, Hanoi, telephone number 852 3257.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the provision of this form and agree to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep one copy of this form for your records and return the signed copy to me in the envelope provided.

## Interview Consent Form

This is to confirm that I have agreed to participate in the study conducted by Duong Van Thanh, a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA. The purpose of this research is to determine what school programs, policies, and activities work together to strengthen relationships within school community. This research is important in that it may contribute to giving educational policy makers recommendations that may results in higher academic achievement for our student. During the interview, questions will be asked relative to parent involvement and relationships within the school community, as well questions regarding communication, trust, and expectations shared by the adult members of the schools community.

I understand that the results of this study are confidential in that no individual or school will be identified in any report of findings. Furthermore, I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any impact to myself, this school, or the individuals within the school.

If there are any question either before or after participation in this study, please contact Duong Van Thanh at A 104 phuong Cong Vi, Quan Ba Dinh, Hanoi Viet Nam at the telephone number 852 3257.

My signature below indicated that I have received and read this form and am willing to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep one copy of this form for future reference and return the signed copy.

## Discussion Group Consent Form

This is to confirm that I have agreed to participate in the Study about social capital and educational attainment in Viet Nam conducted by Duong Van Thanh, a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I understand that the purpose of this research is to determine what school programs, policies, and activities work together to strengthen relationships within school community. This research is important in that it may contribute to giving educational policy makers recommendations that may result in better educational outcomes for our student.

During the interviews, questions will be asked relative to parent involvement and relationships within the school community, as well questions regarding communication, trust, and expectations shared by the adults members of the schools community. I understand that the results of this study are confidential in that no individual or school will be identified in any report of findings. Furthermore, I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any impact to myself, this school, or the individuals within the school.

If there are any question either before or after participation in this study, please contact Duong Van Thanh at 852-3257. My signature below indicated that I have received and read this form and am willing to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep one copy of this form for future reference and return the signed copy.

Letters issued at the Ministry of Education & Training in Viet Nam regarding this field research in Me Linh district, Vinh Phuc province.

Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo  
Số 6261/LQHQT

Cộng hoà xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt nam  
Độc lập – Tự do – Hạnh phúc

Hà nội, ngày 21 tháng 6 năm 2001

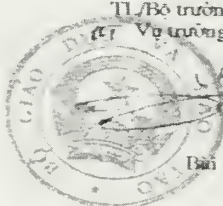
Kính gửi : Sở Giáo dục và Đào tạo tỉnh Vĩnh Phúc

Bộ Giáo dục và đào tạo xin giới thiệu chị Dương Văn Thanh, chuyên viên của Vụ Quan hệ Quốc tế, hiện đang là nghiên cứu sinh tại trường Đại học Massachusetts, Hoa Kỳ. Hiện nay chị Thanh bắt đầu nghiên cứu địa phương để viết luận án tiến sĩ với đề tài:

Gia đình, nguồn vốn xã hội cộng đồng và mối liên hệ với giáo dục trong giai đoạn đổi mới của Việt nam

Trân trọng đề nghị Sở Giáo dục và đào tạo và phòng giáo dục huyện Mê linh tạo điều kiện giúp đỡ chị Thanh trong việc nghiên cứu khảo sát này.

Xin cảm ơn

TL/Bộ trưởng Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo  
Vụ trưởng Vụ Quan hệ Quốc tế  
  
Bùi Công Tho

UBND TỈNH VINH PHÚC  
UBND HUYỆN MÊ LINH  
Số: 21 /GT-UB

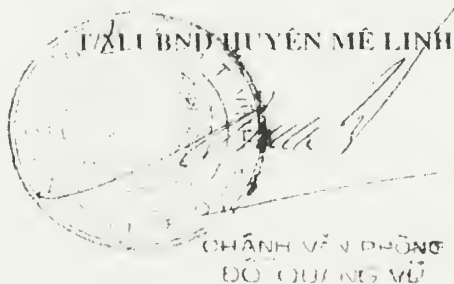
CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM  
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc  
-----  
Mê Linh, ngày 13 tháng 6 năm 2001

## GIẤY GIỚI THIỆU

Trân trọng giới thiệu đồng chí: .....Đường Văn Khang.....  
Là: .....Chủ tịch UBND xã.....  
Được cử đến: .....UBND thị trấn Phúc Yên.....  
Để liên hệ về việc: .....Nghiên cứu khai sát về giá trị.....  
Đề nghị: .....UBND thị trấn Phúc Yên..... hết sức giúp đỡ  
Đồng chí .....Đường Văn Khang..... hoàn thành nhiệm vụ.

Ghi chú:

Có giá trị hết ngày 15/11/2001





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#### **Education**

- Ed.D University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA ( 2003)
- M.A. Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, USA (1996-1998)
- B.A. English Teaching, Hanoi University, Viet Nam (1991)
- B.A. German Language, Hanoi Foreign Language College Viet Nam (1980)

#### **Dissertation**

*Family, Community-based Social Capital and Educational Attainment during the Doi Moi Process in Viet Nam.* (Chair: Dr. David R. Evans, other committee members: Dr. Gretchen Rossman, Dr. Ash Hartwell and Dr. James Hafner)

#### **Primary Research and Teaching Fields**

Educational Policy and Planning, Girls and Women Education, Adult Education, Community Development/Participation linkages with school, Student Development and Leadership, Continuous Assessment and Standard Achievement Test

#### **Additional Teaching Interests**

Evaluation and Administration in Higher Education, Southeast Asia and Vietnamese Studies

#### **Professional Experience**

- Assistant Resident Director (Sep 2001 to present), University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA.  
Assist in the day-to-day administration of a residence hall cluster accommodating more than 500 undergraduate residents; organize educational and cultural enrichment program; conducted judicial conferences and counseling sessions for undergraduate students.
- Educational Consultant  
Assist National Evaluation System ( December 2003 to present) to develop language tests for California stated in the USA.
- Country Program Coordinator (Summer 2001) in Viet Nam  
Assist the Fulbright-Hay Project of Western Massachusetts' teachers to visit Southeast Asia Countries in Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam.
- Educational Consultant



Assist Verite' – a non-profit organization in Amherst, Massachusetts - to design and implement and monitor an educational program for young workers at the Nan Kang Footwear factory located in Vinh Long Province (July 2000-March 2001).

- Educational Consultant

Oxfam Great Britain in Vietnam (Summer 1999), conducting a field research and facilitator of the training workshop for principals and community leaders on strengthening community participation for girls' education, in Lao cai, Vietnam

- Educational Consultant

UNICEF in Vietnam (Summer 1997), conducting a field research on girls' work and girls' education in Son La, Vietnam

- Translator/ Interpreter at the Translator Center, University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Translator for the ALS International in New York
- Interpreter for Catholic Church Services in Boston

- Graduate Student Senate (Sep 1998-2000)

Family Issue Advocate at the Graduate Employee Organization, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA.

- Senior Program Officer, International Relations Department, Ministry of Education and Training, Hanoi, Viet Nam. Responsibilities included coordinating of student exchanges and educational exchanges among American and Vietnamese institutions (1992-1996).
- Program Coordinator, Ministry of Education and Training in Viet Nam. Responsibilities included managing and coordinating educational projects in cooperation with UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank (1987-1992).
- Coordinator, Ministry of Education in Viet Nam. Responsibility included coordinating for Student Exchanges with European universities (1981-1987).

### **Fellowships and Awards**

1996-2000: Fulbright fellowships

2000 David Kinsey Award at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

1997 Macarthur Award at the University of Minnesota

### **Publications**

#### **Books**

- Book Chapter: Leading Organizations for Universal Design, co-author with Dr. Joseph . Berger, Head of the Department for Educational Leadership, Research and Administration, School of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

- *Chapter: Multigrade Teaching and Alternative Basic Education in Post War Viet Nam: One Purpose, Different Ways*, chosen as a case study author for the Project “Education and Social Reconstruction in Latin America and East Asia.”. July 2003. This Project is assisted by the Inter-American Bank/Japan Program and implemented by the Institute for Reconstruction and International Security through Education
- *A Case Study on Community Development and Girl’s Education in Northern Upland Areas of Viet Nam*, 1999, published by Oxfarm, Ha Noi.
- *A Case Study on Girls’ Work and Girls’ Education in Viet Nam*, 1997, published by UNICEF, Ha Noi.
- Co-edited: *International Relations in Education and Training in Viet Nam*, 1996, Hanoi: Publishing House, in Vietnamese.
- Co-edited: *Viet Nam Education and Training Directory*. 1995, Hanoi: Publishing House, in English.

### **Newspaper/Column**

- Fulbright News, August 2002: “Critical Thinking in the U.S. School System and Its Applicability for Viet Nam”, US Embassy Hanoi, Viet Nam
- UNICEF Newsletter Bulletin, Fall 1999: “Strengthening Girls’ Education through Community Participation.”
- Graduate Voice, “UMass Library in Crisis”, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Volume 12, No. 6, April 1999.
- Graduate Voice, “WomenLead”, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Volume 10, No. 3, January 1999.

### **Work in Progress:**

- Educational Assessment in Viet Nam: Issues and Challenges

### **Paper and Presentations**

- November 2003, Inter-American Bank/Japan Program Conference in Washington D.C. “The Future of Children and Youth in Countries with Conflicts: Education and Social Reconstruction in Latin America and Asia” 18 – 20 November 2003. Paper presented at this Conference: “*Multigrade Teaching and Alternative Basic Education in Post War Viet Nam: One Purpose, Different Approaches*”
- March 2003: CIES Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. Paper presented at the Conference: “*Learning from the Field: Applying Dimensions of Social Capital Theory and Educational Attainment during the Doi Moi Process in Viet Nam.*”

- October 2001, CIES Northeast Region Conference at UMass, Amherst. Paper delivered at the Conference: “*Alternative Learning Modes in Viet Nam.*”
- February 23, 2001, Student Research Conference and International Forum at Harvard University. Paper delivered at the Conference: “*Embedded Role of Education in Creation of Social Capital.*”
- February 4-6, 2000, CIES Northeast Regional Conference at the Columbia University, New York. Paper delivered at the Conference: “*Rethinking Confucian Education in Viet Nam*”.
- May 1998, International Conference on Girls’ Education in Washington D.C. Paper delivered at the Conference: “*Girls’ Education in Viet Nam*”.

### **Teaching Experience**

- Advisor for Student Leadership and Group Dynamics (Fall 2003)
- Instructor for Student Leadership Edu 339 (Spring 2003)
- ESL teacher at the Crocker Farm Elementary School in Amherst (2001)
- Tutor in Basic Statistics for Undergraduates at the United Asian Learning Center at UMass (2000)
- Teaching Assistant for Educ. 229 Course on International Education (1999)

### **Research Experience**

- Research Assistant for Program Development at the Center for International Education, UMass, research including girls’ education in India and African (1998-1999)
- Research assistant for Freeman Center for International Economic Policy, Hubert Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota. (1997-1998)

### **Professional Affiliation**

- Member, American Educational Research Association
- Member, Comparative International Education Society
- Member, American College Personal Association

### **Computer skills**

- Proficiency in SPSS, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe, Page Makers and Publisher.

### **Languages**

- Excellent command of Vietnamese, English and German.



